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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF JEREMIAH

by

Otis Rose Fischer

(A.B., Rice Institute, 1928)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1933

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## INTRODUCTION.

Childhood curiosity, which presses beyond the "Keep Off The Grass" signs, does not long endure. The world refuses to cultivate it and it soon withers away, so that by the time the majority of people reach the age when they can truly appreciate the values gained through a study of historic characters, they care nothing about making the necessary explorations into the sacred section of the souls of great religious leaders. They feel that the Divine halo which surrounds the Saint should not be touched. The radiant circle of light becomes a shroud or a veil which separates the holy life of an individual from the world of sin in which we dwell, instead of serving as a beacon that calls the world to higher realms. They do not care to penetrate the brightness or to allow their souls to drink from the everlasting wells of past personalities. Some excuse themselves by saying that their own personal life is not worthy enough to explore the soul and to study the religious experience of a genius. Others brush the opportunity aside with

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the statement that fate controls all action. This group feels that all great religious teachers have been endowed with a supernatural power and are in no way responsible for their personal actions. If this be true, then God controls every human act and life consists of no more than the ability to conform to and to make ourselves enjoy the things we are compelled to do. However, both of these attitudes must be cast aside before we can reap the real benefits of a study concerning the life of Jeremiah. In order to realize that Jeremiah was the master of his own soul, we must pierce the glow of his living influence, which spreads throughout the ages, and discover the life from which it radiates. If we are to know Jeremiah, we must acquaint ourselves with the problems which he faced and see them as he saw them. When we do this we shall be able to appreciate the true value which Jeremiah has rendered to humanity in general and to ourselves in particular.

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ordinary human-being grappling with the great problems of life and determined to master them regardless of cost. The world has long felt the influence of Jeremiah, it has long honored his ideals and almost worshipped them, but far too often, it has regarded this great Hebrew Prophet as a peculiar individual, stripped of all human qualities and compelled to play the part of a tool in the hands of his Creator. That common conception of Jeremiah does not coincide with the truth. He was a man filled with human desires, he loved his God, he loved his nation, he loved his home, and he loved nature in all her forms. He mingled with life in every degree and loved it as much as man could, but he refused to allow his love or his personal desires to interfere with his vocational consciousness. He had a message for the people he loved, and he was determined to present that message, regardless of persecution, in an attempt to save that people from destruction.

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lightning, then again he is quiet and meek; sometimes he is stern as a brass wall, then again he weeps like a child; sometimes he prays for the annihilation of his enemies, then again he prays for all Judah. Are not these examples of a typical human character? Jeremiah, as an individual, struggles with his problems. He challenges the accuracy of the word of God and commands Yahweh to listen to his cause. He pleads for an answer to vital questions but receives no answer, and finally rests all his conclusions upon the truth as it was revealed to him. The knowledge gained from an intensive study of Jeremiah would be beneficial to any person for, it would acquaint him with the spirit of a man who wrestled with God in order to acquire greater insight into the ways of humanity, and it would inspire him to continue his personal battle until he received the assurance that his convictions were right just as Jeremiah continued his struggle until the answer proved satisfactory.

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with the personality of Jeremiah. The primary source of our knowledge comes direct from Jeremiah himself, and is found in the Old Testament. The authenticity of many sections within the book of Jeremiah has been challenged and some passages have been labeled non-Jeremian, but enough verses pass the severe criticism of Doctor Bernh. Duhm to enable one to build a substantial picture of the Prophet. Within the book of Jeremiah are his personal confessions which he gave to humanity and which history has preserved. It is through this group of writings, in particular, that we learn to know the prophet as a man among men, fighting for a noble ideal, trying to improve the conditions of his own day, but refusing to place a veneer over the decayed civilization of his age. No horticulturalist took greater care in pruning and patching a tree, than Jeremiah did in caring for the people of Judah. He was in earnest as he attempted to destroy every blighted spot in Judean society before he began to erect a new structure.

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Smith upon the confessional passages of Jeremiah. Both scholars have made a conscientious study of the Hebrew Prophet and both devote a section of their book to a study of the inner life of Jeremiah. Doctor Skinner in Prophecy and Religion deals exclusively with Jeremiah's confessions in Chapter XI "Individual Religion - The Inner Life of Jeremiah." Skinner gives his own translation to the confessional passages, emphasizes the inward feelings of the Prophet, and stresses his individuality. Doctor George Adam Smith in Jeremiah devotes his seventh lecture to, "The Story of His Soul". He also translates the confessional passages and includes a few other sections in order to show the bitter protest which Jeremiah made and the agony which he endured to follow his vocational consciousness. Jeremiah felt that he was predestined to carry on his work and he made his sacrifices accordingly. The work of Doctor T. Crouther Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, forms the basis for the section, in this paper, on Jeremiah's mysticism. These sources form the background and with

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them as a foundation we shall study the Religious Experience of Jeremiah, not in order to render a rational explanation of his actions, but to understand the man, who stood out in a corrupt age as a mighty rock which the waves of sin could not move. First we shall give the historical background of his age and then with the use of a restricted imagination we shall give a picture of Jeremiah's childhood and youth. A discussion of the type of religious experience which Jeremiah underwent will follow a description of the human Jeremiah and after that section we shall deal with his call. The final section of the paper will discuss Jeremiah's religious life during the five great periods of his career. First, from his call, 626 B. C. to the inauguration of the Deuteronomic Reform, 621 B. C. Second, from, 621 B. C. to the death of Josiah in, 608 B. C. Third, from the battle of Megiddo, 608 B. C. to the battle of Carchemish, 604 B. C. Fourth, from, 604 B. C. to the first Babylonian captivity, 597 B. C. Fifth, from, 597 B. C. to the second captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem

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in, 586 B.C. As we catch glimpses of Jeremiah during these historical periods, let us watch him grow in spirit and knowledge of Yahweh, his God, and the God of Israel.

In the year 722 B. C., the ten Northern tribes were blotted out of existence by the powerful forces of the Assyrian Empire. Sargon, Assyria's leader, made the following report concerning Israel's final stand, "At the beginning of my reign, in the first year... Samaria I besieged, I captured. 27,250 people from its midst I carried captive. 50 chariots I took there as an addition to my royal forces.... People from the lands which my hands had captured I settled in their midst. My officers over them as governors I appointed. Tribute and taxes I imposed upon them after the Assyrian manner." This brief record tells a complete story and fulfills, in a partial form, the predictions of the Northern Prophets. Israel had refused to hearken to the words of Yehoiachin and had paid a tremendous price for her wickedness and backsliding.

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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

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1. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 427.

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During this period, the two Southern tribes



which comprised the nation of Judah were under the leadership of Ahaz (735 - 720 B. C.) a weak cowardly monarch. They did not suffer from the cruel methods of the Assyrian army because Ahaz was willing to pay an enormous tribute for peace. During the Syro-Ephraimitic war the decayed kingdoms of Israel and Syria had attempted to force Judah into taking up arms against Assyria. The prophet Isaiah assured<sup>1</sup> Ahaz that there was nothing to fear but the King had his own plan of purchasing peace and he carried it out. His tribute to Assyria was extremely heavy and he was forced to strip his nation of a vast majority of her resources. He, " cut off the panels of the bases, and removed the laver from off them, and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stone. And the covered way for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he unto the house of Jehovah, because of the king of<sup>2</sup> Assyria." However, the heavy burden of taxation

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1. Isaiah, 7.

2. II Kings, 16:17-18.

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did not meet with the approval of the people and they began to seek means of gaining relief. Yet, Ahaz ruled and maintained peace in spite of the cost and when his son Hezekiah came to the throne, ( 720 - 692 B. C. ), the nation of Judah was suffering from the strains of poverty. Since Egypt was steadily increasing her power it was an easy matter for the anti-Assyrian party to favor an alliance with the Egyptians in order to strengthen the political situation of Judah. The prophets, chiefly Isaiah, warned the Judean leaders that the negotiations with Egypt would bring nothing but harm, " Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your<sup>1</sup> confusion." But the economic condition of Judah did not improve and communications with Egypt were carried on in spite of Isaiah's prediction of the<sup>2</sup> captivity.

Sargon watched his empire closely and when he saw the seeds of rebellion sprouting, he took immediate

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1. Isaiah, 30:3

2. Isaiah, 20.

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Belshazzar watched his empire closely and when he saw the seeds of rebellion sprouting, he took immediate



action. His expedition against Azuri, the king of Ashdod, resulted in a victory and while in the vicinity, Sargon probably strengthened his relationship with Judah by demanding an explanation for her actions. Records from Sargon, reported by Doctor Wade, refer to Judah as being, " among 'the plotters of sedition' who, in order to stir up rebellion, 'had brought gifts of friendship to Pharaoh.' It is possible, indeed, that the overthrow of Ashdod was accompanied by an inroad into Judah, for the Assyrian king in another inscription claims to have subdued Judah; but the occasion referred to is obscure."<sup>1</sup>

In 705 B. C. Sargon died and Sennacherib became ruler of Assyria. Like all other kings of ancient times, he was compelled to prove his ability as a soldier before he gained control of his empire. He soon succeeded in this factor by putting an end to the revolt of Merodach-Baladan, who had been a constant threat to the Assyrians during the reign of Sargon.<sup>2</sup> Hezekiah's unexpected and somewhat sudden recovery from

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1. Wade, Old Testament History, p. 367.

2. II Kings, 20:1-11.

action. His expedition against Aswat, the king of Ashdod, resulted in a victory and while in the vicinity, Sargon probably strengthened his relationship with Judah by demanding an explanation for her actions. Records from Sargon, reported by Doctor Wada, refer to Judah as being, "among the plotters of rebellion" who, in order to stir up rebellion, had brought gifts of friendship to Pharaoh. It is possible, indeed, that the overthrow of Ashdod was accompanied by an incursion into Judah, for the Assyrian king in another inscription claims to have subdued Judah; but the occasion referred to is obscure.<sup>1</sup>

In 705 B. C. Sargon died and Sennacherib became ruler of Assyria. Like all other kings of ancient times, he was compelled to prove his ability as a soldier before he gained control of his empire. He soon succeeded in this factor by putting an end to the revolt of Merodach-Baladan, who had been a constant threat to the Assyrians during the reign of Sargon.<sup>2</sup> Sennacherib's unexpected and somewhat sudden recovery from

1. Wada, Old Testament History, p. 367.  
2. II Kings, 20:1-11.



his sickness pleased the defeated Merodach-Baladan who, hearing the news, sent messengers to congratulate the Judean monarch. Hezekiah greeted the messengers in royal fashion but Isaiah censured his conduct for Isaiah saw in it the possibilities of war. The Ethiopians also sent delegations to Hezekiah, Isaiah<sup>1</sup> protested, but his advice was not heeded by Shebna, Hezekiah's treasurer. The anti-Assyrian party gained strength and finally cast the authority of Assyria aside by refusing to pay tribute. Hezekiah knew the result and began to prepare for war, he fortified the city, strengthened the water supply of Jerusalem, and destroyed the watering places outside the city in order to hinder the invading army. A spirit of nationalism prevailed, " Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there is a greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us<sup>2</sup> , and to fight our battles."

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1. See II Kings 20:12f. also Isaiah 22:15f.

2. II Chronicles, 32:7-8.

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But Sennacherib was determined to show that he was the master of his kingdom and, after defeating Merodach-Baladan, he turned his forces west to punish the rebellious nations of Palestine. Hezekiah's war preparations went for naught and the report of Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B. C. reads, " And as to Hezekiah, the Judean, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 of his strongholds, fortified cities, and smaller of their environs without number, with the onset of battering rams and the attack of engines, mines, breaches, and axes(?) I besieged, I captured. 200,150 people, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number I brought out of their midst and counted as booty. He himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem his capital city... As to Hezekiah himself, the fear of luster of my lordship overcame him and the Urbi and his favorite soldiers whom he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his capital city, deserted. With thirty talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, rouge...beds of ivory.. all sorts of objects, a heavy treasure; also his

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daughters, the women of his palace, male and female musicians he sent after me to Nineveh, my capital city, and his messenger to present the gift and to do homage.<sup>1</sup> This account agrees with the Biblical record found in II Kings, 18:13-16 where Hezekiah admits his offense before the Assyrian king and gives him the treasures of the Temple.

The possibilities of a complete moral and social breakdown in Judah, following the campaign of Sennacherib, were averted when Hezekiah launched a reform movement. Isaiah had preached reform for a number of years and had sought to destroy the vain sacrificial system of the Judeans.<sup>2</sup> Finally Hezekiah called all Israel together for a celebration of the Passover and about the same time Isaiah changed his message from condemnation to the prediction of a glorious era and the inviolability of Jerusalem. Sennacherib heard of the affair and marched toward Jerusalem. This time Isaiah possessed the courage and said, "Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria. He shall not come

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1. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 433.

2. Isaiah, 1:10-17.

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unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my <sup>1</sup> servant David's sake." The Assyrian army approached the Judean capital but were unable to proceed with <sup>2</sup> their campaign. The records in our possession are scanty and do not give us a complete history of the <sup>3</sup> event but we do know that the Assyrian army withdrew. The people of Judah rejoiced over their deliverance and gave praises to Yahweh, the deliverer.

Hezekiah continued to carry out his reform program, aided of course by the prophets, and did accomplish a great deal in the destruction of the

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1. Isaiah, 37:33-35.
  2. See II Kings, 19:35-37, also Isaiah, 37:36-37.
  3. Herodotus, The History of Herodotus, Book II, chapter 141, "As the two armies lay here opposite one another, there came in the night a multitude of field mice, which devoured all the quivers and the bow strings of the enemy, and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields. Next morning they commenced their flight, and great multitudes fell as they had no arms with which to defend themselves."

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Canaanitish superstitions and worship. He was regarded by the late Judaeen chronicler as a great king and his reign has been connected with the glorious reigns of David and Solomon.<sup>1</sup>

King Manasseh ( 692 - 638 B. C. ) followed the reign of Hezekiah and was instrumental in leading a revolt against the reforms of his father. Tradition places him as the person responsible for the death of the prophet Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> Manasseh not only revolted against the reforms of his father, but also rebuilt the altars of Baal and offered his own children as sacrifices to the Canaanite Gods.<sup>3</sup> No doubt but what Jeremiah refers to this period when he reports God as saying, " Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other Gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high-places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto

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1. II Chronicles, 30:26.

2. Barton, A History of the Hebrew People, p. 279.

3. II Chronicles, 33:5-6.

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1. II Chronicles, 33:22.
  2. History of the Jewish People, p. 292.
  3. II Chronicles, 33:2-6.



Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither  
<sup>1</sup>  
 came it into my mind."

While Manasseh continued his wicked reign, the people of Judah enjoyed a period of peace. No foreign nation attempted to rebel against the Assyrian power and Manasseh readily paid his tribute. Some of the Judeans may have regarded this purchased freedom as Yahweh's sanction to the policy of Manasseh and may have given their influence to bringing the reaction to the reforms of Hezekiah into reality. However the case might have been, Manasseh ruled and restored the Canaanitish elements of Religion.

Family trouble within the house of Sennacherib resulted in his death and the ascension of Esarhaddon, ( 681 - 668 B. C. ), to the throne of Assyria. Esarhaddon was one of the greatest and wisest of all the Assyrian monarchs, he sought to consolidate his empire with mildness. He rebuilt Babylon and dealt well with all the conquered nations. Egypt took advantage of the Assyrian policy and attempted to start a rebellion but they were not successful.

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Manasseh took a part in this revolt and was brought<sup>1</sup> to Babylon for an interview with Esarhaddon. The Assyrian records of this of this period mention the name of Manasseh as one of the kings subject to<sup>2</sup> Esarhaddon.

Ashurbanipal ( 668 - 626 B. C. ) took over the control of the Assyrian government at the death of Esarhaddon. To prove his ability as a soldier he led his army into Egypt and destroyed the city of Thebes, ( 663 B. C. ). It was during the rule of Ashurbanipal that the Assyrian Empire reached its heighth.

But Egypt was still to be reckoned with for under the rule of Psammetichus, ( 663 - 609 B. C. ) she gained steadily in power and her growth stimulated the action of the anti-Assyrian party in Judah. The determination to break away from the Assyrian yoke was renewed but Assyria was weakening too rapidly to interfere.

During the reign of Manasseh, the work of the Deuteronomists took place for the fruits of Hezekiah's

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good reign could not be destroyed by his son. Doctor Ewald goes so far as to say that the work could not have taken place under any other conditions than those peculiar to his age.<sup>1</sup> Manasseh's death placed his son, Amon, upon the throne. He pursued the same program as his father and in a brief period plots grew and finally culminated in the death of Amon. Josiah, his eight-year old son, was then crowned king of Judah but the priestly element carefully supervised the governmental affairs during his extreme youth.

In the midst of the world-wide political turmoil, Jeremiah was born. The Assyrian Empire had reached the highest point of her power and was on the verge of complete collapse. The Neo-Babylonian forces had been growing since the days of Sargon. The Medes and the Persians had already entered the stage of world history. Egypt, even after having been defeated time and time again, was on the road to recovery. In fact, all the nations of the world were ready to stage another struggle for supremacy.

The Scythians, a horde of people from beyond the

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 The Egyptians, a horde of people from beyond the



borders of the contesting nations, swept through the Assyrian Empire plundering everything. The Medes and the Persians were shrewd enough to take advantage of the Scythian invasion. However, their lack of organization prevented them from making immediate use of their opportunity and they did not appear as a world power until after a few decades had passed. But Babylon was anxiously awaiting an opening and when the opportunity came, she plunged in to claim the leadership of the world. Necho, the Egyptian leader, also saw visions of an increased territory and led his forces upon a campaign to conquer the eastern nations.

Jeremiah grew during this struggle and he watched each move of the various nations with an eagle eye. The fall of Assyria, the battle of Megiddo ( 608 B. C. ) an Egyptian victory resulting in the death of king Josiah, the battle of Carchemish four years later drove the Egyptians from Palestine and placed the Neo-Babylonian forces in charge of Judah. During this period, Judean politics wavered to and fro until 597 B. C. when Nebuchadrezzar took Jerusalem and carried her finest people into captivity. Later Judah rebelled again and

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in 586 B. C. the city of Jerusalem fell into the hands of Nebuchadrezzar, who left it a mass of ruins. Jeremiah lived through these upheavals.

History has influenced many great characters either in a positive or in a negative manner for there is a tendency to enter into the spirit of the times. But Jeremiah was too noble a person to allow world movements to interfere with his convictions. The world about him and the ruling authorities changed rapidly. Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon controlled Judah during his lifetime, but Jeremiah did not change his political ideals. His change resulted in an increased knowledge of God and in a clearer conception of the ethical and moral demands of Yahweh. Few men have stood so strongly against the evils of their age without seeing a single result of their labors but the vocational consciousness of Jeremiah did not allow him to deviate an hair's breadth from God's plan. He was a messenger of God and fulfilled his task. He meditated long, he saw clearly, and he spoke accurately. His own generation refused to listen but the world which treated him so roughly was soon to realize

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her mistake and in the years that have followed his death, the world has showered him with tributes.

"To understand a genius we ought to go back to his adolescence, but this is seldom possible. We can trace a great man's history back to his first achievements in his art or activities to the 'call', perhaps, which first made him conscious of an ideal and the life long duty of service to it, yet the real circumstances, the early morning fascination of that call, are apt to be hidden from him, in later life as from ourselves. Neither he nor we looking back upon it, can separate the memories of the starting point on the long journey of the various experiences brought by the rest of the road. The great man is to us always the great man. We can not strip him of his later achievements and come to the point at which he was also and anything remarkable, and hardly have another to believe in himself, and not adding to his credit, who could not talk, as he looked into the grey mist, where the road would lead (if indeed it was to lead anywhere at all), and who was so close to his friends

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and to himself, than an unknown lad from some little Nazareth, the son of a Carpenter.<sup>1</sup> It is true that we would like to know more about the childhood and youth of Jeremiah but we are forced to rely chiefly upon our imagination for this period of his life. However, we have some material which will serve as a check to many fanciful notions that might develop regarding this period of the prophet's life. We know that he was, "the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin."<sup>2</sup> From this fact, which is of great importance, we lay the foundation for our picture. Four other elements stimulate and curb the imagination as it builds the structure. First, the rich biographical material contained in his book, which, in accordance with the rule governing eastern biographical writing, gives a clearer insight into the personality of the character involved than the western biographical writing, which merely gathers facts and connects them into story form. The knowledge we possess concerning the personality of Jeremiah following his

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call certainly throws a ray of light upon his early life. Second, a careful study of the illustrations used by the prophet, as he shaped his message into terms which could be understood by his people, will reveal some of his childhood traits. Third, a general knowledge of the living conditions and the historical setting of the age in which Jeremiah spent his childhood are beneficial for the national and religious ideals which surround the home of a growing child have an influence upon him. Fourth, a knowledge of the geographical environment which, as his illustrations show, had a great influence upon his life during the formative years of his youth. If one is successful in combining the above four sources, a portrait of the earlier years of Jeremiah can be painted with a fair degree of accuracy.

Jeremiah was born during the closing years of the reign of Manasseh, or about 645 B. C. His father, Hilkiah, was a member of the priestly guild in Anathoth, a small village not more than three miles to the north, north-east of Jerusalem. Tradition and common belief maintain that this group of priests owe their existence

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to Abiathar, one of the bearers of the Ark during the  
 reign of King David.<sup>1</sup> Abiathar had supported Adonijah  
 for the throne of David instead of Solomon and when  
 the latter became king, he sought vengeance. Abiathar  
 was driven from the city of Jerusalem and forced to settle  
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 of the Anathoth priests, Jeremiah could trace his  
 ancestry back to the house of Eli. Just imagine the pride  
 of a noble ancestry and then know how it stimulated  
 the boy by pouring rich memories into his growing mind.  
 His connection with the priestly family brought many  
 other conveniences. It gave him membership in the  
 upper class of society and the privileges that went with  
 it, chief of which was his education. He learned to  
 read and to write and he constantly heard the oral  
 traditions of his great race. He may have studied the  
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 that he had read the book of Amos and it is certain  
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1. I Kings, 2:26.

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 upper class of society and the privileges that went with  
 it, and of which was his education. He learned to  
 read and to write and he constantly heard the oral  
 traditions of his great race. He may have studied the  
 1 and the 2 documents of the Pentateuch along with the  
 other historical books of his time. It is very probable  
 that he had read the book of Amos and it is certain  
 that he had studied Hosea for the last of the



Northern prophets left his work that placed an indelible mark upon the message of Jeremiah. He heard his father and the leaders of Anathoth discuss the past and future events of Israelite history. He learned to observe nature as well as mankind, for his message is filled with illustrations that must have burned their way into the thought-life of Jeremiah during his youth in the city of Anathoth.

Perhaps it would be well to describe the city as it stands today, for the living conditions in Palestine change very slowly. We quote from Doctor Harry Emerson Fosdick, who after crossing over the brow of Scopus, "rode down in a half hour more to the little, dirty, disreputable stone village of 'Anata'. Its streets are narrow and unkempt, its inhabitants bedraggled, its houses and court yards unbelievably filthy, and its total aspect poverty<sup>1</sup> stricken and repellent." I doubt very much whether this description would have passed the censorship of the leading men of Anathoth in the year 630 B. C. for their standard of judgment may not have been as

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1. Fosdick, A Pilgrimage to Palestine, p. 164.

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highly developed as that of Doctor Fosdick's. But the stone houses and the narrow roads are the same. The city of Anathoth is not situated on any of the main highways of Judah, even though it is less than three miles from Jerusalem. However, Anathoth, or Anata as it is now called, does lie at a strategic point and the invading armies seldom missed the little town which served as a supply base while the main army carried out its attack upon Jerusalem. But, while Anathoth was off the main roads and in a semi-secluded position, it was very near to two of the chief highways of the world. One wound its way eastward from Jerusalem through the rocky region down into the ghor of the Jordan, a road which later became famous as the setting of the Good Samaritan story. The other road led to the fertile plains of the north and passed through the towns of Bethel and Shechem. Surely Jeremiah, during his early youth, had opportunities to wander down to these roads and watch the travellers pass by with their wares. As he observed the life upon the highways, his mind became filled with ideas. History and geography, vague subjects for many

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people, became living matter for Jeremiah. It would not be using the imagination too much to think of the growing boy as he listened to the stories of world movements from the travellers making plans whereby he could help his own nation if trouble came. Through his contact with life, he came to know the nations of the world, their leaders, and the ideals for which they stood. All this added strength to the foundation upon which Jeremiah built one of the keenest political minds in world history.

Something should be said in regard to the scenes of nature that swept before the ever observing eye of the lad and which certainly stimulated his imagination. He could not see Jerusalem from his home but he could see the sacred city by climbing to the top of the hills less than a mile southward. The fact that only a few miles stood between his home and the city of David would cause one to believe that Jeremiah, during his childhood and youth, had seen the great walls of Jerusalem a countless number of times and that he had visited the Temple built by Solomon some centuries before. His exact relationship with Jerusalem and

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the frequency of his visits would of course depend upon the dealings which his father had with the government or with the Temple, but in any case, the lad certainly knew the history of Jerusalem. The view to the north was much broader and Jeremiah's eye could not help but glance across the rocky soil of his tribal country into the fertile lands of Ephraim. To the north of Anathoth, much of Israelite history had been enacted. Shiloh, with the memories of Eli and the Ark, was there, the plains upon which Saul, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, had proved his ability as a soldier were there, and the land of Ephraim, which at one time belonged to his own kinsmen, fellow-members of the Rachel tribes, was there - but it was governed by a foreign king. The question WHY? would only be the normal inquiry of an interested youth. The answer would have been the same regardless of the author. Israel had refused to listen to the words of the prophets which God had sent to warn them of their wickedness. They had rebelled against Jehovah and their rebellion ended in the destruction of their nation. All this had taken place less than a century

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before and the people of the Northern Kingdom were still in captivity. This partially explains the sympathy which Jeremiah displayed toward the Northern kingdom and especially toward Ephraim, relatives of his own. As Jeremiah heard these stories, it would not have required much imagination on his part to have longed for the time when he would have the ability to help restore the Israelite nation. ( Most boys have high ideals until some external force drives them out of existence.)

The view to the east could not help but exert a positive influence upon the life of Jeremiah. Anathoth is situated upon a shoulder of the earth's surface and her eastern boundary falls away into the broken barren rocks that lead down to the northern tip of the Dead Sea.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah could not see the ghor of the Jordan with its tropical fruitage but he could see the barren rocks in which the fugitives sought to find shelter. It was this view that impressed the soul of Jeremiah and caused him to write, " At that time it shall be said to this people and to Jerusalem,

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1. Smith, The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p. 315.

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a hot wind from the bare heights of the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to winnow, nor to cleanse." " I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light." " I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of Jehovah, and before his fierce anger." This hot desert region, filled with white rocks and radiating a terrific glare, from the sun, played a great part in the lives of many religious leaders. Amos had grown up amid the same scenery, John the Baptist dwelt in and about the same wilderness, Christ spent time there during his temptation experience. But this barren rocky scene was not all that greeted Jeremiah's eye for beyond the wilderness the mountains of Gilead are visible. Over these mountains the first rays of the sun came each morning carrying their message of hope. Such a view aided Jeremiah and during the darkest hours

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1. Jeremiah, 4:11.

2. Jeremiah, 4:23.

3. Jeremiah, 4:26.

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of his life, hope drove away the fears just as the sun drove away the darkness of night. The green plains and low hills of the west served as a nesting place for the sun but Jeremiah was not interested in that view for the day of the Philistines was over and Judah had nothing to fear from them.

Some have regarded Jeremiah as a recluse and feel that the prophet cared nothing for human life. But that attitude does not coincide with the facts. Jeremiah loved human life and he loved nature, he saw the sudden growth of vegetation in the springtime when the warmth and the moisture compelled the seeds to burst open, he saw the reaction of the crop to the heat of the summer sun later in the year, and finally, he saw the merry harvest season which followed a period of hard work. Jeremiah carefully observed the farmer in his field, The children at play were noticed. He saw the refiner of silver working over the crucible trying to remove the good metal from the bad. He learned

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1. Jeremiah, 4:3
  2. Jeremiah, 6:11.
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of the strife which existed between the debtor and  
the creditor.<sup>1</sup> He had seen the humiliation of the  
thief as he stood before his accusers.<sup>2</sup> He had  
witnessed the scenes of lamentation which accompany  
a funeral service<sup>3</sup> and had seen the innocent  
festivities which were a part of the wedding feasts.<sup>4</sup>  
He knew nature for he loved the handiwork of God.  
He watched the migratory storks sweep across the  
sky in the seasons of their migration.<sup>5</sup> He was well  
acquainted with the yelp of the jackal and the roar<sup>6</sup>  
of the lion.<sup>7</sup> He saw the helpless sheep slowly  
straggle over the hills without the guiding hand of  
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fullness of Jeremiah's life and to the importance of  
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The religious environment in which Jeremiah  
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1. Jeremiah, 15:10.

2. Jeremiah, 2:26.

3. Jeremiah, 16:5.

4. Jeremiah, 2:32; 7:34.

5. Jeremiah, 8:7.

6. Jeremiah, 9:11.

7. Jeremiah, 5:6.

8. Jeremiah, 23:1f.

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between his functions as a priest and the Temple worship at Jerusalem. That his parents were loyal is brought out in the fact of the name which they gave to their son. " In Hebrew his name takes the form of Yirmyahu, or (shortened) Yirmya. Its meaning has not been reached with any certainty. Conjectures are, 1. that of Gesenius, 'appointed of Jehovah', 2, that of Hengstenberg, 'Jehovah throws', thus tracing the origin of the word as a Jewish name to the opening of Moses' song of triumph (Exodus 15.) and 3. that of Simonis, 'exalted of the Lord;' i.e. (1) the Lord's exalted one, 'Jehovah shall exalt', or (2) the Lord's (i.e. the greatest) exaltation, compare Moses 'exceeding fair'. ... This is as good as either of the former.<sup>1</sup> Doctor George Adam Smith says, " Just before his birth Egypt and the small states of Palestine broke from allegiance to Assyria. War was imminent, and it may have been because of some hope in Israel of Divine intervention that several children born about the time received the

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1. Streane, Jeremiah and Lamentations, p. IX.

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name Yirmyahu - Yahweh hurls or shoots. The boy's name and that of his father's, Hilki'ah, 'Yahweh my portion', are tokens of the family's loyalty to the God of Israel, at a time when the outburst in Jewry of a very different class of personal names betrays on the part of many a lapse from the true faith, and when the loyal remnant of the people were being persecuted by King Manasseh.<sup>1</sup> The incident of Jeremiah's name and of his father's should convince us that the family of which he was a member was loyal to the worship of Yahweh, the Lord of Israel.

However, the worship of Yahweh may not have prevailed in the village of Anathoth. Doctor R. A. S. Macalister says, in referring to the relationship between Anathoth and the goddess Anath, which no doubt, "was actually the 'Queen of Heaven' against whose worship Jeremiah protested in vain. Jeremiah's own village, Anathoth, had been consecrated to her worship."<sup>2</sup> It is true that King Hezekiah might have destroyed the high-place at Anathoth in which Anath was worshipped but it is also true that the

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2. Macalister, A Century of Excavation in Palestine, p. 298.

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1. Smith, *Jeremiah*, p. 88.  
 2. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, p. 205.



shrine could have been restored by Manasseh, " For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had destroyed: and he reared up the altars of Baal, and made a grove as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the hosts of the Heaven and served them." Thus, during his childhood, Jeremiah became acquainted with the religious elements opposed to Yahweh, the God worshipped in his own home. As Jeremiah played with the neighboring children, these conflicting religious ideas were brought into his mind. He became sensitive just as children today, reared in the midst of religious conflict with parents determined that their view is the only right view, become sensitive. And in the struggle between Yahweh and Anath or between the house of Abiathar and Zadok, the little youth took no active part but certainly he made plans whereby Yahweh worship would become supreme and whereby he could restore the priestly house of Abiathar to its earlier position in the Temple. Such an ambition would be consistent with the young lad, Jeremiah.

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They : It is possible that Jeremiah might have remembered the closing years of the reign of Manasseh and the short reign of Amon but the facts concerning them would have been vague unless they had been reinforced by the reports of his elders. However, he should easily have remembered the crowning of Josiah, a child of about his own age. This new king was under the influence of a priestly group and before his rule was completed, the nation was to witness the deuteronomic reform.

That : When Josiah became king, Judah was in no immediate danger from the outside world. Assyria was busy straightening out her personal troubles. Egypt, though constantly gaining strength, was too weak to give battle. Babylon slowly mustered her forces but the powerful Assyrian history of one victory after another prevented her from making a premature attack and allowed Assyria to remain supreme.

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Just previous to the final quarter of the seventh century before Christ, the Babylonians, an Indo-Germanic migration, swept over western Asia.



They feared neither the people of the land nor the powerful armies of the Assyrians but went their way plundering and robbing the country. The news of their cruel actions spread across the country and the inhabitants of Judah began to tremble. Jeremiah heard the story and felt that the rumbling in the north might possibly mean the destruction of Judah, just as a century before it had meant the captivity of the northern kingdom. Any ordinary youth under such conditions would meditate over the problems that stood before him, and surely Jeremiah, a lad who had reached the point where he understood national movements, would wonder about the outcome. He had enough patriotism in his soul and desired first of all to save his own nation - but what course would he take? Was he to be like Hosea and warn the people of their wickedness? Was he to be like David and lead an army to victory? Or was he to find a third method which would be more apt to succeed? What would he do? He couldn't speak, he was too young. He could not lead an army, he had had no experience. But he did wish to serve. In his childhood he had

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learned to know Yahweh and he was willing to place his faith in Him, but that was not enough, he wanted to act. The answer came, and it came clear, pure, and real, 'the call to service'. From the time of his 'call' Jeremiah developed his vocational consciousness until he became one of the greatest of the prophets and one of the outstanding leaders in the army of his Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel. He fought his battle so well that twenty five hundred years after his death, Doctor Rudolf Kittel writes, " All in all, the world has seen few greater than he. It has seen many who have had greater worldly success, many with greater prosperity and more joy, but few men of greater and finer will power."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kittel, Great Men and Movements in Israel, p. 366.

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JEREMIAH - THE MAN.

Experience proves that life is a series of paradoxes and for that reason Jeremiah's pessimistic message, filled with predictions of doom, fails to give a complete picture of the man. Jeremiah was commanded to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to overthrow, but he was also commanded to build and to plant. As we examine the latter two elements, we find Jeremiah's pessimism forms nothing more than a crust which covers a heart filled with a burning love and an everlasting hope. Jeremiah's life displays qualities of hate and love, of fear and courage, and of despair and hope. These qualities alone, in their various forms, give the prophet the stamp of a human being.

A sample of Jeremiah's bitter hatred toward his fellowmen is shown when he cries out in a fit of anger, "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword: and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows:

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and let their men be put to death; let their young men<sup>1</sup> be slain by the sword in battle." At another time, hatred gained control of his emotions and Jeremiah prayed, " Yet, Lord, Thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let them be overthrown before thee: deal thus with them in the time of thine anger."<sup>2</sup> It is almost impossible to give an explanation of these sudden outbursts of ill feeling toward mankind and, yet, when we realize the sensitiveness of his life and the trying moments which he faced, we cannot help but admire his strength and ability to maintain his faith and trust in God. Doctor Calkins phrases it well, "Temperamentally, like any other poetic nature, he was irascible. His experience did not tend to lessen this characteristic. His sensitive nature was plowed and harried by the circumstances of his life. Every event of his life jarred on his high strung nerves. He was tortured beyond endurance by the implacable foes who pursued him."<sup>3</sup> And with that

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1. Jeremiah, 18:21.

2. Jeremiah, 18:23.

3. Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet, p. 204. ,

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be slain by the sword in battle." At another time,

hated gained control of his emotions and Jeremiah

prayed, "Yet, Lord, Thou knowest all their counsel

against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity,

neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let

them be overthrown before thee: deal down with them

2

in the time of thine anger." It is almost impossible

to give an explanation of these sudden outbursts of

ill feeling toward mankind and, yet, when we realize

the sensitiveness of his life and the trying moments

which he faced, we cannot help but admire his strength

and ability to maintain his faith and trust in God.

Doctor Calkins phrases it well, "Temperamentally, like

any other poetic nature, he was irascible. His experience

did not tend to lessen this characteristic. His sensitive

nature was plowed and harrowed by the circumstances of

his life. Every event of his life jarred on his high

strung nerves. He was tortured beyond endurance by

3

the implacable loss who pursued him." And with that

1. Jeremiah, 18:21.

2. Jeremiah, 18:23.

3. Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet, p. 204.



thought, perhaps, we can understand Jeremiah's reactions if we can not explain the moments when his pernicious emotions gained control of his being and caused him to utter such foolish curses as, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; Let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man child is<sup>1</sup> born unto thee; making him very glad." of Jeremiah

Jeremiah also experienced moments when his love for both God and humanity ruled supremely and during these moments his love was of the highest type. He loved his Lord God to the extent that anyone failing to abide by the command of Yahweh became his personal enemy. He loved his nation, not in a narrow patriotic sense, but with a broad understanding and a deep insight into his fellowmen and when he was forced to prophesy its destruction, his heart was torn with sadness. He loved the Temple and the noble history which stood behind it. He even risked his life in making an attempt to save the sacred shrine which Solomon had constructed but his efforts were in vain. He loved his home and was

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1. Jeremiah, 20:14-15.

thought, perhaps, we can understand Jeremiah's reactions if we can not explain the moments when his passionate emotions gained control of his being and caused him to utter such foolish curses as, "Curse be the day wherein I was born; but not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed. Curse be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man child is born unto thee; making him very glad."

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broken hearted when his own kinsmen turned against him. He loved the little children and in his busy career, he took time to watch them play in the streets. He loved nature and admired the way it conformed to the will of God. Some may question Jeremiah's love on the point that he failed to marry and establish his own home but they are not justified in drawing such a conclusion. The batchelor life of Jeremiah might have resulted from Hosea's influence, we do not know. But we are certain that he regarded it as a command of God not to possess a wife, "The word of the Lord came also unto me saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place." Yet, could it not be that Jeremiah's love for womanhood was so great that he dared not ask one of them to endure his life of hardship? Jeremiah certainly possessed a clear conception of his task. He knew the dangers that stood in his pathway but he was determined to follow his call and his vocational consciousness refused to

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1. Jeremiah, 16:1-2.

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grant him a permit to change his course. He was fully aware of the suffering that was to be inflicted upon him and he did not care to ask some one else to share his life of trouble, for trouble always comes when one advocates change. When man possesses a love that compels him to endure his own suffering, he must be given credit for it. One more point remains which should convince all that Jeremiah knew the exact meaning of love. That is his conception similar to that of Hosea, of the earliest relationship between Israel and God as that of a bride and her lover. "I remember for thee, the loving kindness of thy youth, the love of thy bridal days. How thou followest after me in the desert, in a land not sown."<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah feared the greatness of his task and this caused him to shrink from the commands of Jehovah.<sup>2</sup> "I know not how to speak for I am but a child." is an example of his nature. But Jeremiah did speak and he spoke well for God commanded him to do so and informed him that he had been constructed as, "A fortified city,

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1. Jeremiah, 2:2.

2. Jeremiah, 1:6.

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and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee."<sup>1</sup>

But there were times when Jeremiah showed the courage of a true prophet. He faced the angry mobs at the Temple and condemned their religious practices.<sup>2</sup> He stood before King Zedekiah and said, "But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given to the land of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand."<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah may have trembled at times but the world in which he lived never knew it. He kept his appearance in spite of his inward suffering and proved his courage as a prophet of God.

Jeremiah was no hermit living apart from society. He was always conscious of his physical surroundings as well as divine. He spent moments observing and studying humanity just as he did in silent meditation and in communion with God. Jeremiah knew the work of

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1. Jeremiah, 1:18-19.

2. Jeremiah, 7; 26.

3. Jeremiah, 38:18.

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1. Jeremiah, 1:18-19.  
 2. Jeremiah, 7: 28.  
 3. Jeremiah, 38:18.



the farmer, he knew the play of the child, he knew the experience of the young lover, he knew the thoughts of the priests, he knew the actions of the king and of his court, and he knew the habits of the birds and of the beasts. Can any person capable of drawing illustrations from these various phases of life live in isolation?

Constant contact with life brought Jeremiah into periods of despair and loneliness because it brought him face to face with the failures of humanity. There were times when he could scarcely endure the intense suffering which society inflicted upon him, yet, he remained a part of that society and tried to mold it into a better form. He suffered both physically and mentally, his body was beaten and tortured, his soul was ripped into pieces, still, he held on and in spite of some personal objections, he carried out the message as God gave it to him. Doctor Longacre sums up this particular phase of the Prophet's life very well, "It was by virtue of such high-souled bravery that Jeremiah was able to withstand isolation and persecution. His book offers no list of physical dangers into which he was forced, such as Paul gives in II Corinthians

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11:24-27, but it reports at least two occasions when he was in danger of his life. Jeremiah 11:18-20 and 26:8. He also had been placed in stocks, Jeremiah 20. Once he was imprisoned and left to die, Jeremiah 37:16-20, and at another time cast into a dungeon for the same fatal purpose, Jeremiah 38:4-6. But none of these things moved him. Not only was his message searching and uncompromising, but his courage matched his<sup>1</sup> message."

But neither Jeremiah's determined message of doom nor his personal suffering which sometimes caused hatred to sprout forth from his heart, were strong enough to destroy his spirit of optimism and hope. Jeremiah faced the ugly facts of Judean life and pled for national repentance but he was not successful. He continued to preach a message of doom until Jerusalem fell into the hands of Babylon and her best citizens were taken captive. Jeremiah's knowledge of God plus his sympathy for the exiles caused the prophet to study the situation and as he meditated upon the problem, he

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1. Longacre, A Prophet of the Spirit, p. 37.

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had a vision of two baskets of figs.<sup>1</sup> One basket consisted of bad figs and represented the people of Jerusalem, the other basket consisted of good figs and represented the people in exile. The proud and haughty people that remained in Jerusalem refused to listen to the prophet and he sent a letter to those in exile expressing his belief in a bright and glorious future when they would return. " Build ye houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters..."<sup>2</sup> All these commands carry a sign of peace and prosperity which Jeremiah expected to appear in the new day of Judah's recovery. The prophet hoped for and predicted an ethical revival in Judah, " For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them and not pull them down; and I will plant them and not pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people and I will be their God: for they shall

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1. Jeremiah, 24:1f.
  2. Jeremiah, 29:5-6.

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return unto me with their whole heart." <sup>1</sup> An expression of hope is also found among the writings previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. It comes immediately after a vivid picture of the horror and destruction which would result from the Scythian invasion and reads, " For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end." <sup>2</sup> Some authorities claim that the words are a later addition to the text and research favors their view, but the person making the edition had caught the true spirit of Jeremiah and felt that his message, even in the earliest stages, could not be complete without a strong element of hope.

Numerous passages containing an element of hope may be found within the book of Jeremiah, some have been quoted and we shall add two more quotations to the paper, " Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pastures! Saith the Lord. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; ye have scattered my

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1. Jeremiah, 24:6-7.
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1. Jeremiah, 24:6-7.
2. Jeremiah, 4:18.



flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: Behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will gather the remnant out of all countries whither I have driven them, and I will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.<sup>1</sup>" and, "Yea, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the King of Judah and of Jerusalem; they shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord: then will I bring them and restore them to this place."<sup>2</sup> These passages contain elements of hope that can not be denied. But Jeremiah believed in practice as well as theory and during the darkest hours of the war between Judah and Babylon, the prophet purchased a field in his home community at Anathoth.<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah

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1. Jeremiah, 23:1-4.
  2. Jeremiah, 27:22.
  3. Jeremiah, 32:6f.

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1. Jeremiah, 33:1-4.  
 2. Jeremiah, 33:9-10.  
 3. Jeremiah, 32:6-8.



felt that he was commanded by God to buy the land and he knew that God would never have required him to purchase land that would soon be destroyed, therefore, he hoped for Judah's recovery.

Jeremiah was a person of moods. There were times when he was cynical and claimed that no honest man could be found within the city of Jerusalem, "Run ye to and fro through all the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgement, that seeketh the truth; and I<sup>1</sup> will pardon it." There were periods in his life when he wished to flee from everything and find refuge in solitude. "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, and<sup>2</sup> assembly of treacherous men."

There were moments when Jeremiah wept and others when he felt like weeping because of the people's refusal to listen to the message of Yahweh, "Oh that

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1. Jeremiah, 5:1.

2. Jeremiah, 9:2.

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my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.<sup>1</sup> But if we call Jeremiah a 'Weeping Prophet', we over emphasize a single and a minor element in his life. Doctor Longacre says, " As a matter of fact, Jeremiah wept, just as Paul wept, and just as every oriental wept, and weeps today. But he was no lachrymose weakling as might be supposed from the mild aversion with which he is regarded by some energetic Christians, and still less is he a proper subject for some of the cheap wit that claims him for a victim. Such a reputation is quite misleading and is contradicted<sup>2</sup> by his whole history."

Charles E. Jefferson declares that Jeremiah was<sup>3</sup> not a weeping prophet, but, " a man of passionate feeling." Other scholars have the same idea for they, too, have caught the vision of the man behind the passages which give a picture of a weeping prophet. Jeremiah loved his country and when he saw the treasures, which he regarded as sacred, perishing, he could not help but cry out in

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agony. He warned them as best he could but they would not listen, he examined himself, but found no fault, then as a parting remark he cried, " But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride: and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." <sup>1</sup> Again he received a command from God, " Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them. Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow." <sup>2</sup> Jeremiah's emotions and love for his homeland were very similar to those of Jesus, who cried, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them which are sent unto thee, how often would I gather thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." <sup>3</sup> Or on another occasion when the writer reports <sup>4</sup> " Jesus wept."

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1. Jeremiah, 13:17.

2. Jeremiah, 14:17.

3. Matthew, 23:37.

4. John, 11:35.

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  2. Jeremiah, 14:17.
  3. Mattew, 23:37.
  4. John, 11:35.



Every person has friends of some sort for he cannot live in complete isolation. Yet, great men, as a rule, have relatively few friends as friendship grows out of an understanding heart and experience proves that only a few people are able to understand the heart and the life of a genius. This was the case with Jeremiah and it gives a solution to the problem of his loneliness. The same explanation has been rendered in the cases of three leaders in American political life, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson, who, with friends scarce, fought for noble ideals. However, we must admit that though the genius has only a few friends, the few which he does possess, recognise the inherent greatness of the man and are intensely loyal; so it was with Jeremiah. At times, Baruch seems to be the only friend who shared suffering with the prophet and his relationship, as amanuensis of Jeremiah, is often likened to the relationship which existed between Boswell and Samuel Johnson.

But a closer examination of Jeremiah's life reveals more friends. It was the influence of a

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But a closer examination of Jeremiah's life reveals more friends. It was the influence of a



friend that saved the prophet from the fate of Urijah when he prophesied the destruction of the Temple.

" Nevertheless the hand of the Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him to the hand of the people to put him to death.<sup>1</sup> In those days, human life possessed little value, even in Judah, and it required sincere friendship plus considerable influence to protect the life of any person from an angry mob. When Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon to die, it was an Ethiopian friend that brought about his rescue, " Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon.. went forth out of the king's house and spake to the king, saying, My Lord, the King, these men have done evil in all that they have done unto Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; for he is like to die in hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city...And Ebed-melech said unto Jeremiah, put these old cast clouts and rotten

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1. Jeremiah, 26:24.

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 said unto Jeremiah, put these old goat cloths and rotten



ragged under thine arm-holes under the cords. And <sup>1</sup> Jeremiah did so, and they took him out of the dungeon." Kings had placed death penalties upon people for such remarks and advice and the Ethiopian knew the danger but he took the chance and the King granted his desire.

Jeremiah's friends were not limited to Judah, for after the fall of Jerusalem, we find that the Babylonian King, Nebuchadrezzar, regarded Jeremiah as a friend. He commanded his leaders to, " Take him, and look well to him, and to do him no harm; but to do <sup>2</sup> unto him even as he shall say unto thee." The action here might have easily resulted from friendship with the family of Ahikam, who rescued Jeremiah after his Temple speech, for it was Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, that Nebuchadrezzar placed in charge of the desolated nation. But above all others, Jeremiah possessed an eternal friend, his Lord, God of Israel, who protected him from death, " And the King commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and

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1. Jeremiah, 38:7-13.

2. Jeremiah, 39:12.

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Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe<sup>1</sup> and Jeremiah the prophet: but the Lord hid them."

Jeremiah was a man of prayer. Wellhausen refers to him as the Father of Prayer. Doctor Bundy says, "Personal and private prayer of high order is the product of prophetic piety, especially of a religious experience like that of Jeremiah."<sup>2</sup> Doctor Calkins claims that the petitional element fades away and that the intercessory element takes its place in the prayers<sup>3</sup> of Jeremiah. Doctor Charles E. Jefferson feels that Jeremiah was not an instructor nor an exhorter in prayer, but that he taught prayer by praying. Jeremiah's religious environment gave him an excellent foundation in prayer and from this basis he continued to develop until he reaped all the rewards that go with earnest prayer. Jeremiah did not find prayer monotonous or dull for his childlike faith filled it with interest. Sometimes he scolded and reprimanded God, sometimes he pled for an answer to some vital question, and sometimes his baser emotions gained control and filled his prayers with

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1. Jeremiah, 36:26.

2. Bundy, Jesus Prays, p. 27.

3. Calkins, Jeremiah the Prophet, p. 222.

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1. Jeramish, 36:26.  
 2. Bundy, Isaac Price, p. 37.  
 3. Calkins, Jeramish the Prophet, p. 122.



thoughts of evil and vengeance. Whenever Jeremiah felt that his prayers were not being heard, it drove him into a deeper spiritual mood and he strengthened his plea to the ruler of the universe by demanding and answer. Thus, it was through a life of prayer that Jeremiah gained his conception of God and his prayers became conversations with God always listening.

He prayed against his opponents,<sup>1</sup> "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine." He prayed for himself,<sup>2</sup> "O Lord Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke." and, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise." Then again, he prayed for his nation,<sup>3</sup> "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name sake, for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against Thee. O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a

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1. Jeremiah, 18:21f.
  2. Jeremiah, 15:15; 17:14.
  3. Jeremiah, 14:7-9.

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1. Jeremiah, 18:21.
2. Jeremiah, 12:15; 17:14.
3. Jeremiah, 14:7-9.



wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest Thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not." The prayers of Jeremiah are all worthy of study and meditation and they are found in chapters, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 32.

Jeremiah's work and method form an interesting part of his career. His age was filled with a society of superstitious people, who opposed change, fighting for the status quo. Jeremiah stood against the existing social order and denied that Moses was the author of instructions that led to evil practices, " Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices." He claimed<sup>1</sup> that the Ark of the Covenant was no longer necessary.<sup>2</sup> He even declared that the Temple did not possess power

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1. Jeremiah, 7:21-22.

2. Jeremiah, 3:16.

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enough to protect the Holy city of Jerusalem or the nation of Judah which God cherished.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah was determined to destroy the old order and he entered his career with the command to remove the old before he started to build the new. He had the spirit of an honest builder, for no contractor would consider building a permanent structure upon the decayed ruins of another age. If he is efficient, he tears away every thing and lays a new foundation that will hold the stress and strains of the future as well as the present. Persons have no objection to this move in the physical realm and the old landmarks are torn down to make room for the new. They say we must go on, and we must if life is worth while. Changes must also take place in the mental realm and whenever we find that our present religion does not meet the needs we must adopt the spirit and method of Jeremiah in creating a new and purer form of religion.

As Jeremiah pointed out the existing evils, he spared neither rank nor class. All people were equal in his conception of humanity and he dealt with them

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah, 7:4-7.

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as such. He used argument, then appeal, and finally resorted to prayer in order to change the living conditions of his age. His success failed to arrive, but he continued to work.

We often think of Jeremiah as a mere prophet and overlook his qualities as a statesman. However, Doctor Gordon regards Jeremiah as a statesman of the highest rank.<sup>1</sup> First, he possessed a 'world mind' and was able to see beyond the narrow boundaries of his own class and nation. Second, he possessed that quality of insight which causes a person to reach sound conclusions. "He was right, his diagnosis was accurate, his insight was unerring, and his moral and spiritual instinct sure."<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah was an inquisitive person. He asked questions concerning any subject which troubled him for he did not blot out the interrogation point with a tabu. Concerning God's goodness, he asked, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, Chapter III,

2. Ibid, p. 68.

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, Chapter III.

2. Ibid., p. 58.



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 to repent and to adopt the New Covenant.

In this brief survey of Jeremiah's life, we have  
 tried to cover his outstanding characteristics. We know  
 that he was emotional but not irrational, we know that  
 he possessed hope as well as despair, we know that he  
 suffered for an ideal and that his heart was filled with  
 love, we know that he had friends as well as enemies,  
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1. Jeremiah, 12:1.

2. Jeremiah, 12:5.

3. Jeremiah, 8:5.

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1. Jeremiah, 12:1.
2. Jeremiah, 12:2.
3. Jeremiah, 12:3.



JEREMIAH'S TYPE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

Some refer to Jeremiah as an abnormal person because his experience is uncommon to all, and we agree, provided the word abnormal does not carry a subnormal meaning. Jeremiah was abnormal only in so far as he was above the average in his relationship to God. Doctor William James says, "There can be no doubt that as a matter of fact a religious life exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and eccentric. I speak not now of your ordinary religious believer, who follows the conventional observances of his country, whether he be Buddhist, Christian, or Mohammedan. His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit. It would profit us little to study this second hand religious life. We must make search rather for the original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct. These experiences we can only find in individuals for whom religion exists

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not as a dull habit, but rather as an acute fever. But such individuals are 'geniuses' in the religious line; and like many other geniuses who have brought forth fruits effective enough for commemoration in the pages of biography, such religious geniuses have shown symptoms of nervous instability. Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholia during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to **obsessions** and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah, in a number of points, would fit into the idea of James, but not entirely. Doctor Gordon dealing directly with Jeremiah, comes much closer, "The

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1. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 6f.

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1. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 61.



prophet was believed to be in touch, in a peculiar way, with the mind of God, and the belief is justified by the many notable instances in which the word of the Prophet came true. The evidence as it lies before us in the Hebrew Prophets, and particularly in the story of Jeremiah, proves that the prophet was an abnormal<sup>1</sup> personality." But, whenever we use the word abnormal to explain the religious experience of Jeremiah, let us also remember the sincere and earnest meditation which Jeremiah used in acquiring his knowledge of God. Jeremiah thought through his problems to the best of his ability, and this thinking made his religious experience of great value for us.

Doctor Gordon is right when he states, " Despite differences of faith and race, we are able to trace a general outline in the religious experience of the sincere soul, the path is pretty well defined. The Moslem Sufi, according to the Katab al-Luma, passes through seven stages in succession, as follows: 1, Repentance; 2, Abstinence; 3, Renunciation; 4, Poverty; 5. Patience; 6, Trust in God; 7, Satisfaction. The

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 11.







Noble Eightfold-path, which Buddha maps out for his followers, begins with Right Views, and ends with Right Rapture. Farid ud-Din tells us in his parliament of Birds that for the Persian mystic there are seven valleys to be traversed, beginning with the Quest and ending in Annihilation. The manuals of Western saints blaze the same trail. It is plain that he who would tread the thorny way to spiritual eminence must begin with stern self-discipline and self control and quaff the cup of self-renunciation, for only thus can he pave the way for that rapture which is at once both union with God and absorption in the divine. This unitive state is the be-all and the end-all of the mystical life, and a consuming love for God its pillar and main support.

" Now it is in the light of the intense spiritual experience of the saints that we meet the question: Must there not be something of the mystic in the soul of such a man as Jeremiah? If the mystic is the specialist in religion, if, that is to say, this is his forte, then there must be common ground where Jeremiah meets him, for the prophet was assuredly a spiritually-minded man.

1. Gordon, The Hebrew Prophet, p. 190f.

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To put it in another way, may not the broad lines of mysticism throw light upon the unsuspected aspects of the prophet's inner experience?<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah did possess some mystical qualities, but his mysticism was largely controlled by rational tendencies. Jeremiah attempted to be rational and refused to allow ecstasy and ineffable experience to dominate his career. It is true that Jeremiah does qualify as a mystic when the tests of William James are applied, but it is also true that Jeremiah was not a mystic in the sense that he sought selfish release from the world and complete union with God. Jeremiah was far too practical for that. He wanted to know God in order to help his people, and though there were times in his life when he was mystical, those periods were guided by a practical aim. Jeremiah, to the end, remained a man of this world.

A careful study of the Confessional passages of Jeremiah reveals conflicting elements in his soul. He was certainly disgusted with himself and could not find a single reason why he should have been born to suffer,

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" Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have not lent neither have men lent to me; yet every one of them doth curse me." and " Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame." <sup>1</sup> are samples of his grief. We find a struggle between the religious ideals of Jeremiah, " And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing. and I cannot contain." <sup>2</sup> Jeremiah gives us a clear picture of a man fighting his way through, breaking the fallow ground of religious experience, and leading others to a better conception of God. He was disgusted with himself, he fought with a divided self, he may even have possessed a sick soul, if we wish to use that name, but he went on, knowing that all would be well if he followed his vocational consciousness and preached the word of Yahweh. <sup>3</sup>

Jeremiah leaned toward asceticism. He did not

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1. Jeremiah, 15:10.  
2. Jeremiah, 20:18.

3. Jeremiah, 20:9

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3. Jeremiah, 20:2

1. Jeremiah, 13:10.  
2. Jeremiah, 20:18.



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 would permit the move. He remained free from the common  
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 care for he was determined that no fault should fall  
 upon his life, " Therefore thus saith Jehovah, If thou  
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 stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious  
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Jeremiah was an individualist and this might have  
 had some bearing on his ascetic life. However, Jeremiah's  
 asceticism was not the result of his desire to withdraw  
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 from the prophet and to compel him to live in isolation.  
 Jeremiah tried to aid but he was condemned by his fellow  
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1. Jeremiah, 16:2.  
 2. Jeremiah, 15:17.

3. Jeremiah, 15:19.

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The various qualities of self-disgust, divided-self, sickness of soul, asceticism, self-examination, and individualism lead toward mysticism. When they are compared with the religious experience of other mystics, we agree with Doctor Gordon, and say, "Here, we feel, is a soul in deep waters, the same waters that all mystics have forded. It points to the fact that Jeremiah was somewhat of a Mystic."<sup>1</sup>

William James gives four characteristics common to the mystic, Ineffability, Noetic Quality, Transiency, and Passivity.<sup>2</sup> Let us examine Jeremiah in the light of each.

Ineffability- Jeremiah was not able to completely describe some of his experiences, especially those regarding God, for his conception of Yahweh was far beyond the power of verbal description,

1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 192.

2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 380f.

Evelyn Underhill in her book Mysticism p. 96, feels that the four tests of William James fail to satisfy and gives four other rules, 1. Mysticism is practical, not theoretical; 2, Mysticism is not entirely Spiritual Activity; 3, The business and method of Mysticism is love; 4, Mysticism entails a definite Psychological Experience. However, though the testing standards of Underhill and James vary slightly, the conclusion reached as either of them are applied to the life of Jeremiah will be the same.

The various qualities of self-disgust, divided-self,

sickness of soul, asceticism, self-examination, and individualism lead toward mysticism. When they are compared with the religious experience of other mystics, we agree with Doctor Gordon, and say, "Here, we feel, is a soul in deep waters, the same waters that all mystics have forded. It points to the fact that Jeremiah was somewhat of a mystic."

William James gives four characteristics common to the mystic, Ineffability, Noetic Quality, Transcendence, and Passivity. Let us examine Jeremiah in the light of each. Ineffability- Jeremiah was not able to completely describe some of his experiences, especially those regarding God, for his conception of Yahweh was far beyond the power of verbal description.

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1. Gordon, The Hebrew Prophet, p. 192.  
 2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 380.  
 Evelyn Underhill in her book Mysticism p. 26, lists that the four tests of William James fail to satisfy and gives four other rules. 1. Mysticism is practical, not theoretical; 2. Mysticism is not entirely spiritual; 3. The business and method of mysticism is love; 4. Mysticism entails a definite psychological experience. However, though the testing standards of Underhill and James vary slightly, the conclusion reached as either of them are applied to the life of Jeremiah will be the same.



" Am I but a local God?  
 No far reaching God?  
 Does a man hide in secret  
 And I see him not?  
 Is it not the heavens and the earth  
 I doth fill?" (Jer. 23:23-24) <sup>1</sup>

God was no longer to be thought of as One limited to the bounds of the Jewish nation, but as One which filled the universe, and such a God cannot be explained nor defined by words. William James says, " The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour." <sup>2</sup> But other stimulants may take the place of Alcohol, as in the case of Jeremiah, when the Majesty of God swept through his soul, and aroused the mystical qualities into action.

" Shattered my mind within me  
 Limp is each bone,  
 I feel like a drunken man,  
 Like a man under wine,  
 Through the face of Jehovah,  
 Through his glorious majesty." (Jer. 23:9) <sup>3</sup>

Jeremiah gives other examples where his union with the Divine was such that it could not be explained

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 202.
  2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 387.
  3. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 204.

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Jerusalem gives other examples where his union with the Divine was such that it could not be explained

1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 202.
2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 287.
3. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 202.



in existential terms. " That which we may legitimately deduce from the typical mystic is that language is of no avail to convey the experience he undergoes. The reality with which he is in touch is purely and simply ineffable. And our prophet, despite all the clearness of his moral teaching, stands in the direct succession of those who, overcome by the intruding of the Divine, have ceased to think of the Eternal and only know the Ineffable. If ineffability be one of the marks of the<sup>1</sup> mystic, then assuredly Jeremiah is a mystic."

been Noetic Quality- William James gives this definition, " Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain, and as a rule they carry with them a<sup>2</sup> curious sense of authority for after-time." Jeremiah certainly possessed a sense of knowledge and authority.

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 205.

2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 380.

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 205.  
2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 280.



His, " Thus saith Yahweh " echoes throughout his prophetic life. Jeremiah condemns the false prophets because they did not stand in the council of Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> His message of destruction has a note of finality, " Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, mine anger and my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched."<sup>2</sup> The knowledge which Jeremiah has given to the religious development of the world has been summed up by Doctor Gordon as, " God's care for the individual, the moral retribution of the world, the superiority of ethics to mere nationality, these and other aspects of the Divine were a definite increase of knowledge concerning God, and, accepting the word of the prophet, these came to him in his mystical state. One might go with the moralists so far as to say that this new ethical teaching of the higher prophecy is the insignia and seal of an authentic mystical experience. There are, at any rate, enough facts and to spare which

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1. Jeremiah, 23:22.

2. Jeremiah, 7:20.

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 because they did not stand in the counsel of Yahweh.  
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Jeremiah Transiency- " Mystical states cannot be  
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 hour, or at the most an hour or two, seems to be the  
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 day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly  
 be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is  
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 moments when he heard the voice of God and when the cries  
 of the people were meaningless. Doctor John Skinner  
 says, " There are in every deeply religious life moments  
 when earthly relationships fall away, when the life of  
 active service is suspended, and the soul is left alone  
 with God, having nothing in heaven or earth to desire  
 besides Him."<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with Jeremiah's  
 experience. He heard the call of God at the beginning  
 of his ministry and that voice was real to Jeremiah.

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 209.
  2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 381.
  3. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 224.

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 209.
  2. Laman, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 281.
  3. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 224.



He heard the same voice warn him of danger and he  
<sup>1</sup>  
 protected himself. It was that voice which commanded  
 Jeremiah to buy cloth and make the sign of the marred  
<sup>2</sup>  
 girdle. That voice told him to go to the potter's  
<sup>3</sup>  
 house and it told him to break the bottle in the sight  
<sup>4</sup>  
 of men. God spoke to Jeremiah and the prophet heard.  
 There were other times when Jeremiah gave indication  
 that the prophetic movement had not been entirely  
 purged of ecstasy, but they were short periods and he  
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 Again we quote Doctor Gordon, " Now the mystic's ecstasy  
 is a transient affair, and the main corollary of this  
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 this is just what the traditional view of the prophet  
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 blindly from the beginning to the end of the book, without  
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 these poetic pieces reveals the interesting fact that  
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1. Jeremiah, 11:18.

2. Jeremiah, 13:1f.

3. Jeremiah, 19:1f.

4. Jeremiah, 19:10f.

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3. Jeremiah, 13:11.  
 4. Jeremiah, 13:10.

1. Jeremiah, 13:10.  
 2. Jeremiah, 13:11.



Paradise Lost, but a collection of very short pieces, loosely and sometimes unmeaningly brought together by a jowl. Some of these prophecies have only four lines, some have ten, and none have more than twenty. It is difficult, at times impossible, to connect one logically with its neighbor. What is the legitimate influence to be drawn from this fact? It is this, that each snippet of prophecy, each separate and self-contained revelation, represents a single trance or vision. We thus find that behind each piece there was a transient and not a<sup>1</sup> continuous mystical state."

Passivity- " Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations....yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance and indeed, sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a super power."<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah, at times, felt that he was in God's power. God's hand<sup>3</sup> touched his lips when he was called. In a personal struggle, God prevailed, " O Jehovah, thou hast

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1. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 213f.
  2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 381.
  3. Jeremiah, 1:9.

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2. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 381.
3. Jeremiah, 1:9.



persuaded me, and I was persuaded; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing stock all the day, everyone mocketh me." <sup>1</sup> The same feeling exists in Jeremiah 20:9 and 23:9. Somtimes the prophet felt that Yahweh commanded him to act, " Thus saith Jehovah: Go down to the house of the King of Judah, and speak <sup>2</sup> there this word." Again he felt that his thoughts and direction were meaningless, " O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that <sup>3</sup> walketh to direct his steps." Then again, Jeremiah felt that he was in union with God, " If there be those who suspect that some of the messages of the prophet smack rather of the prophet than of the Divine, this but adds another presumption that while in mystical communion with God Jeremiah believed himself to be united with Jehovah." <sup>4</sup>

But Jeremiah was more than a mystic for he possessed the mystical characteristics and maintained his mental balance which allowed him to rationalize his experiences. As Doctor Gordon states, " He had a bigger

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1. Jeremiah, 20:7.
  2. Jeremiah, 22:1.
  3. Jeremiah, 10:23.
  4. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 224.

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mind and a stronger moral sense than could be blinded by any purely emotional experience; his mental and moral judgments, even in mystical life, were acute and active. He was the individualist even when he and God became one. And thus we arrive at the curious paradox that while we find the gentle poet of Anathoth to be mystic of the mystics, to be the First of the Mystics, we find also that he refuses to be classed and stereo-typed, for he out-distanced all the mystics in an intellectual and ethical discernment, which is second only to the genius<sup>1</sup> Jesus."

Jeremiah's religion is a matter of interest. Attempts had been made to place religion upon a spiritual level before the time of Jeremiah but they were not successful. The idea of a personal relationship with God had been conceived but it was vague and remained so until Jeremiah clarified it and prepared it for adoption by all religious believers. Doctor McFadyen says, " This severely spiritual conception of religion is but the outcome of the intensely personal religious experience of the prophet. There is no other prophet whose

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intercourse with the Divine Spirit is so dramatically portrayed or into the depths of whose heart we can clearly see. He speaks to God with a directness and familiarity that are <sup>1</sup>startling." For Jeremiah, religion was a matter both mind and heart and it included all emotional and rational qualities, "O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, and triest the reins and the <sup>2</sup>heart." Doctor Welch says, "Religion to Jeremiah means submission to Yahweh on His own terms, and His <sup>3</sup>terms are simply the expression of His Nature."

The Prophet, Amos, regarded God as a dealer of righteousness but he could not catch an accurate glimpse of repentance or restoration. Hosea regarded God as a loving parent and through his conception of <sup>4</sup>Divine love, he found a place for Repentance. Jeremiah began his message with a call to repentance, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. And thou shalt

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1. McFadyen, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 143.
  2. Jeremiah, 11:20.
  3. Welch, Jeremiah, His Time and His Work, p. 60.
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swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory. For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up<sup>1</sup> your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Jeremiah pleaded with the people to return to Yahweh, but they refused to listen. The prophet went on with his work trying to create a purer relationship between the Israelites and their God. He tried every plan which God presented and he saw them fail one by one. However, he sowed for the future and sowed well. He planted ideals which were to develop in a later age but, " though he sowed the most fruitful seeds of Israel's religion, none sprang up in his life time. For his own generation<sup>2</sup> he built nothing."

One cannot study the life of Jeremiah without making the discovery that one is dealing with a man who lives near to God. Jeremiah knew God just as he knew a true friend and he talked with Him just as he talked with his neighbors. His intimate knowledge of God grew out

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1. Jeremiah, 4:1-4.

2. Smith, Jeremiah, p. 320.

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 2. Smith, Jeremiah, p. 330.



of his own personal experience with him, for God's hand touched his mouth when he received a commission to preach the words of Yahweh to all nations. This single experience is one of many which show Jeremiah's awareness of God. Doctor Lofthouse says, " He gave himself up to the companionship of what he felt to be God, as few have done before or since; he devoted every moment of his life, literally, to communion with God.<sup>1</sup>" Jeremiah felt that he was a mere tool in the hands of God and, though he objected at times, he allowed God to use him. Jeremiah saw something more than a stern judge in Yahweh, he saw the tender, loving Father of Hosea who was forever trying to aid His children. Finally, through years of toil and struggle, Jeremiah was able to present his positive contribution to Israelite religion, The New Covenant, it grew out of the very heart of his own religious experience.

Today, God still speaks to us from within, just as he spoke to Jeremiah if we keep in tune with Him as well as Jeremiah did. " God does not speak to us ab extra. His messages come from within. He writes

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1. Lofthouse, Jeremiah and the New Covenant, p. 187

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them, as Jeremiah would say, on the heart. They arise from the deepest level of the Prophet's own mind. They are his thoughts. They could belong to no one else. And so far as he is the child of his time, of his race, or of his creed, so are they."

Oh that we could feel the presence of God as Jeremiah felt it and as Jesus felt it some centuries later.

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1. Exodus, 3:2f.

1. Lofthouse, Jeremiah and the New Covenant, p. 203.

2. The Confessions of St. Augustine, III, 27.

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THE CALL OF JEREMIAH.

As a rule, every great religious leader possesses a few outstanding moments about which the cloak of his life is draped. Moses had a clearer insight into the nature of Yahweh after his experience of the burning<sup>1</sup> bush. Elijah had a better understanding of God after his experience on Mount Horeb.<sup>2</sup> Paul received his conception of the God whom Jesus loved while on a journey to Damascus.<sup>3</sup> Saint Augustine found his desired rest under a fig tree at Milan.<sup>4</sup> One of these moments occurred during Jeremiah's youth and it filled him with a vocational consciousness. He became determined to follow God at all cost and to drive all wicked practices from Judah. We do not know the thoughts that filled the mind of the young Hebrew lad previous to his great religious experience. It is possible that the news of the Scythian invasions might have troubled him - we do

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1. Exodus, 3:2f.
  2. I Kings, 19:8f.
  3. Acts, 9:3f.
  4. The Confessions of St. Augustine, XII, 29.

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  3. Acts, 9:27.
  4. The Confessions of St. Augustine, XII, 29.



not know. Another possibility would be found in the fact that he was greatly influenced by the prophet Hosea, and that after having read and meditated upon Hosea's message he might have received his commission - but again we must add, we do not know. Our knowledge is limited to the report of Jeremiah which mentions his experience but says nothing about the preliminary period. And it is best that we know nothing about this period for such events, as the establishment of a vocational consciousness within the life of an individual, cannot be rationalized. They are strictly personal and they have a direct meaning to the person involved. The others may be interested but only in so far as they come under the influence of or come into contact with the person possessing the experience.

" Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." This experience came during the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah and in all probability during the later years of Jeremiah's youth ca. 626 B. C. The total effect

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1. Jeremiah, 1:4-5

not know. Another possibility would be found in the fact that he was greatly influenced by the project, however, and that after having read and meditated upon Moore's message he might have received his commission - but again we will not know. Our knowledge is limited to the report of Jeremiah which contains his experience but says nothing about the Presidential period, and it is only after we have known about this period for some years, as the establishment of a vocational rehabilitation within the life of an individual, cannot be rationalized. They are strictly personal and they have a direct meaning to the person involved. For others may be interested but only in so far as they come under the influence of or come into contact with the person possessing the experience.

"How few words of Jeremiah come into my mind, today, before I turned them in the Bible I know that, and before I have passed forth out of the world I am still here; I have experienced these things and the nations." This experience came during the nineteenth year of the reign of Josiah and finally probably during the latter years of Josiah's reign - 638 B. C. The total effect



which it had upon the life of the prophet cannot be estimated for it brought the young man to the point where he realized that God had chosen him for a special task. His entire background and heritage now possessed meaning of a most definite sort and out of it came the purpose which was to lead him into the future. Doctor Skinner, in regard to this phase of the prophet's call, says, "The sense of predestination in Jeremiah's consciousness means the conviction that the endowments of his whole nature, his physical and moral environment, all his influences of heredity and education that had shaped his life and made him what he was, had worked together under the hand of God to prepare him for the task to which he was now summoned. He was not to be a mere mouth piece of the word of Yahwe, but a chosen vessel, fitted in every part of his being to be the medium of revelation to his fellow<sup>1</sup> men."

Jeremiah listened to the words of God and then replied, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to<sup>2</sup> speak, for I am a child." No prophet had dared to take

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1. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 28. 2. Jeremiah, 1:6

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such a stand before Jehovah, but Jeremiah was an individualist and could not act like Isaiah, who, after hearing the voice of Yahweh, cried out, "Here am I, send me."<sup>1</sup> Yahweh heard Jeremiah's excuse and with the patience of a mother replied, "Say not I am a child, for on whatsoever errand I will send thee, thou shalt go, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee."<sup>2</sup> The dialogue continued and the prophet refused to tremble before the awe inspiring presence of Yahweh. Jeremiah knew his weakness and he was determined to make it plain. Then Jehovah touched the mouth of Jeremiah with His hand.<sup>3</sup> The young prophet actually felt the presence of Yahweh and his argument had not been in vain. How different from the experience of Isaiah in which the Seraph took the part of a connecting link between the awe stricken man and his Master.<sup>4</sup>

Once more God stated his commission, "I have

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1. Isaiah, 6:8.

2. Jeremiah, 1:7-8.

3. Jeremiah, 1:9.

4. Isaiah, 6:6

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Once more God stated His commission, "I have

1. Isaiah, 6:8.
2. Jeremiah, 1:7-8.
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4. Isaiah, 6:8.



this day set thee over the kingdoms and over the nations, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy<sup>1</sup> and to overthrow, to build and to plant." It was a mighty task for a youth to undertake, and yet, nothing but the spirit of a young person could accomplish such a task as that of uprooting the old and planting a new social and religious order, and this, Jeremiah felt himself forced to do. As Doctor McFadyen says, "He did not choose his profession, he recoiled from it; but he was thrust into the arena of public life<sup>2</sup> by an impulse which he could not resist."

Nothing but the sheer reality of the experience compelled the prophet to go on in spite of all obstacles. Doctor Gordon says, "This conviction of God being behind him is, at any rate, the central nerve and backbone in the activities of Jeremiah, and the man will be a perpetual dilemma until we see this to be<sup>3</sup> the urge and the energy that never gave him peace." Jeremiah, up to the time of this experience, may have

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1. Jeremiah, 1:10.

2. McFadyen, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 143.

3. Gordon, The Rebel Prophet, p. 51

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rested heavily upon the authority of the earlier prophets, he may have admired them as great leaders in Hebrew thought and religion, but from this moment on the source of his knowledge came directly from God his creator. The words he spoke were no longer his, they belonged to God. He possessed a prophetic consciousness that refused to permit him to remain quiet. He was compelled to talk and to proclaim his message to all Judah. In addressing the princes, he said, "Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against the city all the words that ye have heard." <sup>1</sup> The same feeling existed throughout his entire ministry. Jeremiah was acquainted with God and whenever he spoke before the people, the two became one.

Because the story was not written until some twenty years after it had occurred, some people challenge its accuracy. We cannot prove the details of the religious experience which Jeremiah had during those few moments in which he received his commission, but when we see difficulty involved in the fulfillment of the mission and the steady courage of Jeremiah as he faced the

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bitter opposition, then we believe in a Divine source from which the prophet drew his power. As the knowledge of the prophet increases, the doubts which hover about the call vanish and the accuracy of the prophet's reports become a quality which stands out in the life of the man. Why should Jeremiah change his call? It would never give him popularity, it would never make the people listen, it would never be of value to anyone other than himself, but it was of value to him and he cherished those moments as highly as we cherish the greatest moments in our life. I do not doubt the truth of the words for Jeremiah's memory could certainly retain the facts of such an event. However, Jeremiah did not find complete rest and satisfaction in the words of his commission for he still asked sincere questions regarding the affairs of his age. Doctor Longacre correctly says, "Jeremiah's steadfast obedience to his call did not mean that he was able to preserve a perfect serenity of Spirit throughout his long dangerous career. That nervous inquiring spirit advanced to the discovery of religious problems which would have never arisen for a more passive and contented piety."

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Closely connected with the call and commission of Jeremiah came two great visions, first, "Jeremiah what seest thou? and I said, I see a rod of an almond tree." and second, "What seest thou? And I said, I see a boiling caldron; and the face thereof is from the north." These two visions assured Jeremiah that the Lord was always watching and was always interested in life and that the Lord always punished evil. Doctor George Adam Smith adds, "Unrelated as they seem, they symbolize together Jeremiah's prophesying throughout. For in fact this was all blossom and storm, beauty and terror, tender yearning and thunders of doom - up to the very end. Or to state the same more deeply: while the caldron of the north never ceased boiling out over his world - consuming the people, his own among them, and finally sweeping him into exile and night - he never for himself or for Israel, lost the clear note of his first vision, that all was watched and controlled." God gave Jeremiah a definite task to fulfill and the prophet fulfilled it.

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JEREMIAH'S RELIGIOUS LIFE.

The Struggle Between Two Religions- Civilization tends to mold the ideals of her people and cause her citizens to formulate the great truths of existence in terms that are most meaningful. Thus, the pastoral habits of the Israelites influenced their religious beliefs and their conception of God. The Canaanites were agricultural and depended upon the products of the land and that fact influenced their religious beliefs and their conception of God. The God of the Israelites was a tribal deity whereas the God of the Canaanites was a local deity with immense power over nature. The powers of the Israelite God had not been defined. The Canaanite God was a God of fertility, he helped produce better crops. He had power in sexual relations. He was the Baal, owner, husband, or master of the community in which he dwelt and to gain his favor the people offered sacrifices of grain, animals, and sometimes human beings.

These two conceptions of deity, the one not clearly thought through, the other no more than a supreme master

# JEREMIAH'S RELIGIOUS LIFE.

## The Struggle Between Two Religions - Civilization

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of a particular territory devoid of all ethical and moral qualities, met as the Canaanites and the Israelites came together on the fields of Palestine. Doctor Robinson pictures the struggle, " Amongst the more primitive races, religion is inextricably intertwined with men's regular avocations. Israel had known Yahweh as a God of storms, mountains, and deserts. He had led them in safety through all natural dangers, and by His military prowess had beaten off their enemies. They had every reason to be proud of Him, and He had every claim on their loyalty. But it was inevitable that doubts should arise when they entered on the New life symbolised by grain and wine and olive. The Baals were already in possession. If neglected they might become dangerous. ( II Kings, 17:24-28) But, further there was the uncertainty as to whether Yahweh could grow corn. Certainly they had no experience of his abilities in that direction, and we have the direct statement of Hosea<sup>1</sup> to the effect that this doubt lasted in some quarters down to the middle of the eighth century."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Hosea, 2:8

2. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 21f.

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1. Moses, 2:2
  2. Robinson, Pharaoh and the Progress, p. 211.



Had the Israelite people swept into Canaan and conquered the land in one great stroke, the problem resulting from a conflict in ideas within the two religions would never have appeared for the Canaanitish ideas would have perished. But the conquest required centuries, and during that period the customs and habits of Canaanitish worship were able to penetrate into the newly born Yahweh worship. Israelite festivals, with the single exception of the feast of the passover, were adopted from the common feasts of the agricultural folk and were connected with the seasons of the year. The Baals of the land were selfish, in that they demanded the respect of their people, but cared nothing about the social sins of society such as greed, oppression of the poor, corruption of the government, and the cheating of ones neighbors. Baal was content as long as he was honored in or through some formal service and there was no thought of His desire to have the moral conditions of his territory improved. Many of the Israelites followed Baalism to its logical conclusion and gave no thought to the moral demands of Yahweh, their own God.

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But some protested this move and refused to surrender the moral and ethical teachings of Yahweh, the God who had led them out of bondage. Between these two extremes, the majority leaned toward Baalism. However, when King Ahab went so far as to import a Baal from Tyre, they immediately took sides in the revolt led by Elisha and Jehu. They refused to take the step from their God, Yahweh to an imported Baal from Tyre. In the struggle for supremacy between the forces of Baal and those of Yahweh, the prophetic movement received its first impetus and began a process of development which continued through and beyond the time of Jeremiah. Doctor Robinson lines up the forces, " But there were others who, in their devotion to Yahweh, clung to the ideal of the desert life in its entirety. To them Yahweh could never be an agricultural God. The most conspicuous of these were the Nazirites and the Rechabites. Grapes do not grow in the desert, consequently both eschewed the vine and all its products. The nomad had no razor, the Nazirite let his hair grow. The dwellings of the desert are skin or hair cloth tents, or rough shacks built of fronds; the Rechabite would have

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nothing to do with the houses of brick or stone. Their position as Yahweh enthusiasts is well illustrated by their sympathy with the prophetic revolution which placed Jehu on the throne, ( II Kings, 10:15f. ). Even when the faith of Israel was most deeply contaminated with the religion of the Baals, native and foreign, it was still true that Yahweh had left Him seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that had not bowed to Baal and all the lips that had not kissed him. Amongst these the Nazirite, the Rechabite, and above all the Ecstatic<sup>1</sup> were necessarily included."

His First Oracles- Jeremiah received his call ca. 626 B. C. and in all probability he was about twenty years of age. His priestly home had placed him in contact with the religious history of Israel. He knew the story of Elijah and his contest with the prophets of Baal. He knew the story of the reform which took place under the leadership of Elisha and Jehu. He knew the content of the messages which Amos and Hosea had given to Israel and he knew that the Northern Kingdom had rejected the message

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1. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 26f.

nothing to do with the houses of brick or stone. Their position as Jewish enthusiasts is well illustrated by their sympathy with the prophetic revolution which placed Jesus on the throne, (II Kings, 19:15-17). Even when the faith of Israel was most deeply contaminated with the religion of the Baal, native and foreign, it was still true that Jehovah had left Him seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that had not bowed to Baal and all the lips that had not kissed Him. Amongst these the Nazirites, the Rechabites, and above all the Ecclastic<sup>1</sup> were necessarily included."

His First Disciple - Jeremiah received his call c. 626 B. C. and in all probability he was about twenty years of age. His priestly home had placed him in contact with the religious history of Israel. He knew the story of Elijah and his contest with the prophets of Baal. He knew the story of the reform which took place under the leadership of Elisha and Jehu. He knew the content of the messages which Amos and Hosea had given to Israel and he knew that the Northern Kingdom had rejected the message



and had been carried into captivity by the Assyrian Empire. His knowledge of the moral and ethical life of the people of Judah was sufficient to draw the analogy between the history of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. He saw that his own nation was standing in the same position as Israel before her fall.

Jeremiah's commission to preach to all nations was followed by a vision of an almond branch, which showed that God watched all people and that he was ever present, even though outward appearances would cause one to believe otherwise. He started to preach saturated with the message of Hosea, but it is doubtful that he acquired a large following for he was at the very beginning of his work. We quote some of his earliest writings to show the spirit and tenderness of the youthful prophet.<sup>1</sup>

" I remember the troth of thy youth,  
Thy love as a bride,  
Thy following me through the desert,  
The land unsown." (Jer. 2:2)

" What wrong found your fathers in Me,  
That so far they broke from Me,  
And following after the Bubble  
Bubbles became." (Jer. 2:5)

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"I remember the truth of thy youth,  
Thy love as a bride,  
Thy following me through the desert,  
The land unsworn." (Jer. 2:2)

"What wrong found your fathers in Me,  
That so far they broke from Me,  
And following after the Baalim  
Babylon became." (Jer. 2:3)

1. The following quotations have been taken from George Adam Smith's own translations, Jeremiah, pp. 90 - 100.



" And I brought you into a garden,  
To feed on its fruit and its wealth.  
But coming ye fouled My land,  
My heritage turned to loathing." (Jer. 2:7)

" Have any nations changed their Gods,  
And these no Gods at all?  
Yet My people exchanged their Glory  
For that which is worthless." (Jer. 2:11)

" Twain the wrongs my people have wrought-  
Me have they left,  
The fount of live water,  
To hew themselves cisterns,  
Cisterns broken,  
That cannot hold water: " (Jer. 2:13)

" Can a maiden forget her adorning,  
Or her girdle a bride?  
Yet Me have my people forgotten,  
Days without number: " (Jer. 2:32)

" If a man dismiss his wife and she go from him  
and become another man's, shall she return to  
him? Is that woman not too polluted? But thou  
hast played the harlot with many lovers and -  
wouldest return unto Me? " (Jer. 3:1)

" Return ye oft-turning children,  
Let me heal your back-turnings!  
'Here are we' to Thee we are come,  
Thou Lord art our God. (Jer.3:22.)

" Fallow up your fallow ground,  
And sow not on thorns." (Jer. 4:3)

These early poems from Jeremiah show his attitude  
toward the religious practices of his day. He criticises  
Judah for following Yahweh through the desert when no



"And I brought you into a garden,  
To feed on its fruit and its wealth.  
But coming ye loosed my land,  
My heritage turned to nothing." (Jer. 2:7)

"Have my nations changed their Gods  
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Yet my people exchanged their glory  
for that which is worthless." (Jer. 2:11)

"Tear the strong my people have wrought-  
He have they left,  
The fount of live water,  
To new themselves cisterns,  
Cisterns broken,  
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"Return ye old-turning children,  
Let us heal your back-turnings;  
Here are we, so that we are come,  
Then hard art our God." (Jer. 3:22)

"Follow up your fellow ground,  
And see not on thorns." (Jer. 4:3)

These early poems from Jeremiah show his attitude  
toward the religious practices of his day. He criticizes  
Judah for following Jewish through the desert when no



other God attempted to compete but, as soon as they reached fertile ground, they were willing to cast Yahweh aside in order to worship Baal. Jeremiah regarded God as the protector of the Israelites, as the One who had led them out of bondage, through the wilderness, and had planted them in a land of plenty. God thought he had discovered a good vine, but it brought forth corrupt fruit and unless a sudden change took place it would be destroyed. The prophet urged the Judaeans to rely upon her own resources and to develop their own powers as they marched through life.

This early message was cut short by the news of the Scythian invasion. The second vision which the prophet had at the time of his commission was called into action for a rumbling in the north could be heard, the caldron was boiling.

The Scythian Poems- Bad news travels quickly and the Scythians had no sooner entered Palestine than the word was broadcast throughout Judah. The horror and plunder of a ruthless band of heartless people placed fear in the souls of every inhabitant in Palestine. The Assyrian army was helpless, towns were destroyed,

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persons were murdered, and destruction was scattered  
 wherever the onrushing hordes made their attack.  
 Herodotus describes them, " The Scythian soldier drinks  
 the blood of the first man he over-throws in battle."<sup>1</sup>  
 Certainly Jeremiah wondered whether Judah would suffer  
 from their attack. Would she fall as Israel had fallen?  
 The thought spurred him into action and he issued a  
 call for national repentance.

The fourth chapter of Jeremiah is perhaps the best  
 collection of the Scythian poems. Doctor John Skinner  
 divides it as follows:<sup>2</sup> The Watchman's Cry, (Jer. 4:5b-8);  
 The Gathering Storm, (Jer. 4:13-14); The Approaching Foe,  
 (Jer. 4:15-17); The Prophet's Anguish, (Jer. 4:19-20);  
 A Vision of Chaos, (Jer. 4:23-26); The Panic of the  
 Invasion, (Jer. 4:29); and Zion in her Agony, (Jer. 4:30-31).  
<sup>3</sup>  
 We shall quote some of the poems,

" Let the trumpet be blown in the land,  
 Loud be your call:  
 'Assemble and let us escape  
 To the cities with walls.' " (Jer. 4:5b.)

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1. Herodotus, The History of Herodotus, Book IV, Chapter 64.
  2. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 35f.
  3. The quotations are taken from Skinner's translation as  
 they are contained in his book Prophecy and Religion,  
 p. 35f.

persons were murdered, and destruction was wrought

wherever the conquering hordes made their way.

Herodotus describes them, "The Scythian soldier drinks

the blood of the dead man he overthrows in battle."

Certainly Jeremiah foretold what would ensue

from their attack. Would she tell us later had fallen?

The thought spurs him into action and he issues a

call for national repentance.

The fourth chapter of Jeremiah is perhaps the best

collection of the Babylonian poems. - Boston John Skinner

divides it as follows: The Watchman's Cry, (Jer. 4:1-5);

The Gathering Storm, (Jer. 4:15-18); The Approaching

Calamity, (Jer. 4:19-20); The Prophet's Lament, (Jer. 4:21-23);

A Vision of Chaos, (Jer. 4:24-26); The Panic of the

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We shall quote some of the poems.

"But the trumpet be blown in the land,

And be your call:

'Assessible and let us escape

To the cities with walls.' " (Jer. 4:5).

1. Herodotus, The History of Herodotus, Book IV, Chapter 64.

2. Skinner, Prophets and Religion, p. 257.

3. The quotations are taken from Skinner's translation as they are contained in his book Prophets and Religion, p. 257.



" Behold like the clouds he comes up,  
 His chariots a storm wind!  
 Swifter than vultures his horses;  
 Woe to us! We're undone." (Jer. 4:13)

" I looked to the earth - and behold Chaos!  
 To the heavens - and their light was gone.  
 I looked to the hills - and lo, they quivered,  
 And all the mountains shook.  
 I looked - and behold, no man was there,  
 And all the birds of the Heaven were flown.  
 I looked to the corn land - and lo, a desert,  
 And all its cities were razed away." (Jer. 4:23-26)

" Hark! A shriek like a travailing woman's  
 With her first child!  
 'Tis the voice of the daughter of Zion, gasping,  
 Stretching her hands, (and crying)  
 'Woe is me! For my soul faints away  
 At the feet of the slayers.' " (Jer. 4:31)

Other poems of this period are found in the fifth and sixth chapter of Jeremiah. The entire group are filled with vivid pictures of diaster and crying calls for national repentance. The need of reform slips in through the passages at rare intervals. But the Scythian invasion did not last long for, after plundering the majority of the Assyrian Empire the hordes disappeared almost as rapidly<sup>1</sup> as they approached. Jeremiah's prophecies had failed to materialize - but they were of untold value to the prophet

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1. Ewald, History of Israel, Vol. IV, p. 231, assumes that Josiah was besieged by the Scythians.

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His chariot a storm wind;  
Swifter than eagles his horses;  
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"I looked to the earth - and behold Chaos;  
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And all the mountains shook.  
I looked - and behold, no man was there,  
And all the birds of the heaven were flown.  
I looked to the corn land - and lo, a desert,  
And all her cities were raised away." (Jer. 4:25-26)

"Hark! A smother like a twinkling woman's  
With her first child;  
'Tis the voice of the daughter of Zion, gasping,  
Stretching her hands, (and crying)  
'Woe is me: For my soul faints away  
At the least of the enemy.' " (Jer. 4:31)

Other poems of this period are found in the fifth  
and sixth chapters of Lamentations. The entire group are filled  
with vivid pictures of disaster and crying calls for national  
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for they brought out the true attitude of the people of Judah and their willingness to remain in moral and ethical disobedience to Yahweh. Jeremiah was not well known at the time, his fiery speeches in Anathoth may have attracted some attention, but the remarks consisted of nothing more than the common, he is a promising youth. The withdrawal of the Scythians meant that Jeremiah's prophecies would fail and Jeremiah was old enough to feel the sting. He knew that a continued attack would only bring rebuke of his past failure but he also knew that something had to be done if Judah was to be saved for other armies would soon be marching across the country. He retired, momentarily, to plan and meditate. He was determined to meet the crisis with well developed plans. His excitement and statements concerning the religious practices at Anathoth probably created hard feelings between the young liberal and the conservative priests. How would he start the attack? Then came the news of the Deuteronomic Reform. Jeremiah seized the opportunity to assist in the working out of a legal religious reform with delight. Judah would now be forced into the paths of righteousness.

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The Deuteronomic Reform- The disappearance of the Scythians may have given the leaders of Jerusalem a desire to clean and to repair the Temple. As they went about their work, they placed a chest in which the people deposited their gifts to pay for the repairs. Time went on, " And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the King sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of Jehovah, saying, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the money which is brought into the house of Jehovah, which the keepers of the threshold have gathered of the people: and let them deliver it into the hand of the workman....And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah...And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the House of Jehovah, And Shaphan the scribe told the King saying, Hilkiah the high priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king." ( II Kings, 22:3-10 ).

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The book found in the chest is considered to be the kernel of the present book of Deuteronomy and after hearing it read, King Josiah began the great reform, which<sup>1</sup> as Doctor Longacre says, had as its guiding motive, loyalty to Jehovah, and as its guiding method, centralization and "religion codified".

We do not know just what part Jeremiah played in this great reform program. He had received his call approximately five years previous to the inauguration of the reform. He had started his work but had failed when his predictions concerning the Scythian invasions did not come to pass. His boldness and liberalism had broken his friendly ties with the status quo of Anathoth and in disgust the prophet meditated over his problems. Once more he asked the question, What shall I do? Man had judged him a failure, he could find no sympathy from them, but God knew differently and the prophet's relationship with Yahweh grew stronger.

We say we do not know just what part Jeremiah took in the Reform movement but, "It is hard to believe that

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Jeremiah could hold aloof from this great movement, especially at the outset; and although the passage is not definite as might be desired, Jeremiah, 11:1-8 seems to indicate that at first he favored the movement and cooperated with it. It was not long, however, before he saw that in spite of their general obedience to the outer and formal demands of the book, the response to its spiritual ideals was either superficial or lacking. From Jeremiah's point of view the reform was missing its highest aim, and he withdrew his support from it.<sup>1</sup> Doctor John Skinner sums up the relationship of Jeremiah to the Deuteronomic Reform in three points.<sup>2</sup> First, Jeremiah was still a young man and his fame had not reached beyond his own village; for that reason the leaders of the reform in Jerusalem would not have asked Jeremiah's advice. Second, Jeremiah, after hearing of the reform, cooperated with it and placed all his power and enthusiasm behind it for he believed that the salvation of Judah rested in its application. Third, Jeremiah soon saw the folly of it all and felt that the Deuteronomic

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reform was not able to cope with the prevalent immorality and the tendencies toward idolatry. Jeremiah reached the point in his thought life that told him, legal methods would never solve the problem of National Sin.

Doctor George Adam Smith regards the Deuteronomic reform as a divinely inspired, "experiment upon the people, whose mind and conduct beneath it Jeremiah was appointed by God to watch and to test." We might list other arguments in favor of Jeremiah's early action in behalf of the reform but they would add nothing but length to the discussion.

We assume that Jeremiah met the plan of Josiah with favor and that he actually encouraged its adoption. Then let us use our restricted imagination in order to picture the struggle which occurred within the soul of Jeremiah at that particular time and to understand, if we may, how the prophet stepped beyond his narrow home group into a wider field of labor which met the demands of his vocational consciousness. Jeremiah's failure to predict correctly concerning the invasion of the

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Scythians had proved to the satisfaction of his home priests that he was not a prophet of Yahweh, for one of the tests of a prophet was that his prophecies come to pass. ( Deuteronomy 18:20-22. This test had been adopted by the prophetic groups long before it was codified in the Josiah Reform ) Thus Jeremiah a very sensitive soul regarded himself as an outcast when news that King Josiah was attempting to bring about a reform. This reform would stress one altar, one God, and one Temple. Jeremiah saw possibilities in the movement and left his home town of Anathoth to take an active part in the program.

This program would mean the destruction of the high place at Anathoth and its control by the priestly house of Zadok. The Anathoth priests became angry just as the other village priests did, but they were unable to oppose the power of the Judean government. The orders of Josiah were carried out and the Anathoth priests sought to gain revenge for their ill-feelings by seeking out means to harm their kinsman who was supporting the movement. But Jeremiah went ahead with his work for his spiritual conception of religion enabled him to go

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beyond the narrow limits of the group at Anathoth and placed him in a position to study and observe the religious life of all Judah.

As the "Rebel" prophet worked in earnest to aid his government, the people of Anathoth continued to hatch up plots which were to culminate in the death of Jeremiah. They worked hard to bring their schemes into action but the authority of Josiah was too great and they were forced to wait. In the meantime Jeremiah discovered the plots,

" But Yahweh made me know, and I knew:

Their ill deeds I saw; listen and give an

answer, and While I like a tame pet lamb

That is led to the shambles

Knew not that for my undoing

They hatched a plot: warned him that harm

" Let us kill the tree in its sap,-

Cut him off from the land of the living,

That his name be remembered no more." (Jer.11:18-19)<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah's thoughts once more turned to himself.

He was following the command of Yahweh and at the same time helping his government but his enemies were trying to kill him. Was it right or just that they should do so? Jeremiah wondered and then took his question to Yahweh,

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1. Skinner's translation, Prophecy and Religion. p. 111.





" Thou art in the right, O Yahwe,  
Should I dispute with Thee;  
Yet of matters of right  
Would I speak with Thee.

" Why is the way of the wicked so smooth,  
And all the treacherous men at ease?  
Thou plantest them: they also strike root,  
Beget and bear fruit.  
Near art Thou in their mouth  
But how far from their heart!

" But Thou, O Yahwe, hast known me,  
Hast tried how my heart is with Thee,  
Drag them forth like sheep to the shambles,  
For a day of slaughter devote them." (Jer.12:1-3)<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah felt that he was capable of judging his fellow-man and that Yahweh should listen to his advice on justice and act accordingly. God did listen and gave an answer, but it contained nothing whatsoever against the enemies of the prophet. It merely warned him that harder times were still to come,

" With the footmen thou hast run and art weary,  
Then how wilt thou vie with horses?  
If in a land of peace thou art at ease,  
Then how wilt thou fare in Jordan's brake?" (Jer.12:5)<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah found the answer to his philosophical question regarding his personal suffering contained in a deeper question. But Jeremiah was satisfied and began

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his preparation for the future. The future was soon to arrive for King Josiah's attempt to withstand the Egyptian army at Megiddo proved fatal to himself and with his death, the power behind the Deuteronomic Reform ceased.

During the period from 621 B. C. to 608 B. C., Jeremiah had both aided and witnessed the use of legal power in an attempt to purge Judah of her national sins. Some were cleansed but the personal sins remained. Human life, his own in particular, was not valued highly by those who had been friends. Something was wrong with his society and Jeremiah was determined to diagnose the case until he arrived at source of the evil. He carefully observed the reaction of the people as their high places were torn down and he saw that external force would never change the individual. He withdrew his active support from the movement but his life had been endangered by his earlier attitude. His friends on both sides were gone and he was forced to seek comfort and sympathy in his communion with God. The prophet was sincere in his willingness to aid, but the world thought he was a peculiar and a crazy individual.

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From Megiddo to Carchemish- The death of Josiah was followed, so far as the people of Judah were concerned, with the supremacy of Egypt. The citizens, who had favored Josiah's action, were in a state of confusion for Yahweh had allowed their leader to be slain upon the battle field. Some may have argued that the Deuteronomic Reform did not meet with the approval of God and they may have cited Josiah's death as final proof. Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, became king but after a short reign of <sup>1</sup> three months was deposed by the Egyptian powers and Jehoiakim, his brother, was placed upon the throne. The high places were granted the right to resume their worship services. However, the Temple at Jerusalem which did not suffer in the Egyptian conflict was proclaimed the sacred place of Yahweh and Isaiah's inviolability proclamation was declared valid.

Jeremiah was broken hearted when he saw the results of a change in monarchs. He had been protected by Josiah, but now both national political authority and the local authority, which was indeed great during Jeremiah's life time, of his home village stood opposed to the prophet.

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1. II Chronicles, 36:2f.

From Jericho to Jerusalem - The death of Josiah

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The Deuteronomic reform had failed, " Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I harkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turneth to his course, as a horse that rusheth head long in the battle. Yea the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of Jehovah.....And they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."<sup>1</sup> Through communion with God Jeremiah gained strength enough to carry on the battle for righteousness. He could not remain quiet for his vocational consciousness drove him into action in spite of the tremendous odds. Finally he found himself face to face with the busy mob at the Temple. It was his time to act and he acted.<sup>2</sup> " Thus saith Yahwe-Trust not in these misleading words, ' The palace of Yahwe,

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2. Jeremiah's speech has been carefully rearranged by Skinner and I quote it from, Prophecy and Religion, p. 170.

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the palace of Yahwe, the palace of Yahwe, is all this: 'What? Steal and murder! and commit adultery! And swear falsely! and sacrifice to Baal! and then come and stand before Me in this house and say, 'We are delivered':- in order to perpetrate all these abominations! Is it a robbers' den that you take My house for? Verily as such do I also regard it, saith Yahwe. But go now to My sanctuary which was in Shiloh, where I placed My name at first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now because you do all these deeds, I will do to this house in which you trust as I did to Shiloh; I will cast you from My presence as I cast out your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim." Jeremiah realized his danger but he faced it with prophetic courage. He<sup>1</sup> denied the Mosaic authorship of the sacrificial system and claimed that Yahweh never even thought of demanding<sup>2</sup> child sacrifice. He pointed out various forms of idolatry<sup>3</sup> and severely criticized the people for practicing idol worship. The mob reached the point where they refused to listen to their sins any longer and felt that it was their

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1. Jeremiah, 7:21f.
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  3. Jeremiah, 19:5.

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2. Jeremiah, 7:31.
3. Jeremiah, 19:5.



duty to put the troubling prophet out of existence. They would have acted had it not been for an influential friend of Jeremiah who recalled a bit of history and who pled in typical legal fashion that the precedent not be broken.

" Then rose up certain elders of the land and spake to all the assembly of people, saying, Micah, the Morashite, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah King of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against <sup>1</sup> our own souls."

Jeremiah's life was spared but his battle to dethrone evil became more difficult. He refused to believe in the strength of Egypt and he felt the security which Egypt offered would soon vanish. His thoughts soon materialized for Nebuchadrezzar led his forces westward and met the

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Egyptian army at Carchemish. Necho fought well but he could not defeat the Neo-Babylonians and finally he withdrew to Egypt. Nebuchadrezzar was called home because of the death of his father and was unable to follow up his victory. However his men made negotiations with the small territories of Palestine, including Judah, and they paid tribute to Babylon instead of Egypt.

From Carchemish to the First Captivity, 597 B. C.

The battle of Carchemish drove the Egyptians from Palestine and transferred the tribute money into the Babylonian government treasury. But Jehoiakim had been placed upon the Judean throne by Egypt and felt that he owed allegiance to the Egyptians. Jehoiakim's changing policy resulted in a tense mental state. He felt compelled to pay tribute to Babylon but he wished to send his treasure to Egypt. He lost his patience. He had heard Jeremiah's prediction concerning the failure of the Egyptians and after the battle of Carchemish, he sought revenge by refusing to allow the prophet to speak.

But history was beginning to prove that Jeremiah was right. The Babylonians had defeated the Egyptians

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and proved that they were to dominate the world of that particular day. Jeremiah gained confidence. His vision of the boiling caldron was correct for if Judah was to be destroyed, the destruction would come from the north. Jeremiah, filled with a new spirit of enthusiasm, refused to be silenced by the command of the king. He talked with God and finally conceived the idea of writing his message in book form and having his friend, Baruch, read the report before the elders and the king. " And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day." <sup>1</sup> Jeremiah obeyed the command and dictated the prophecies which he had delivered during the preceding twenty three years to his friend Baruch. We do not know the exact prophecies which this book contained, but regardless of the content the book did not have long

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1. Jeremiah, 36:1-2.

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to endure, " Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire in the brazier burning before him. And it came to pass when Jehudi read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier.<sup>1</sup>"

Jeremiah heard of the affair and received his second commission to write, " The word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after the king had burned the roll and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned...Then Jeremiah took another roll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.<sup>2</sup>" Jeremiah's spirit was aflame and

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1. Jeremiah, 36:20-23.

2. Jeremiah, 36:27-32.

to endure, "Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire in the brazier burning before him, and it came to pass when Jehudi read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier."

Jehoshaphat heard of the gifts and received his second commission to write. "The word of Jehovah came to Jehoshaphat, after the king had burned the roll and the words which Balaam wrote at the mouth of Jehoshaphat, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the

former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoshaphat the king of Judah hath burned. Then Jehoshaphat took another roll and gave it to Balaam the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jehoshaphat all the words of the book which Jehoshaphat king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto these many like words." Jehoshaphat's spirit was alive and



he was determined to place his message before the king and before the people of Israel in an attempt to bring about a national repentance.

The book did not change the attitude of Judah and she continued her moral indifference to the commands of Yahweh and sought to find strength and security in her own plans. The group favoring the Deuteronomic reform had been reduced in size but they were still at work,<sup>1</sup> however, Jeremiah refused to assist them. The anti-Babylonian party finally gained control and tribute to Nebuchadrezzar was stopped.<sup>2</sup> Babylon regarded the move as an attempt to revolt and sent hostile clans to make raids on Judah. Death saved Jehoiakim from the evils of a Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah makes a reference to this reign and it is far from being complimentary, "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's service without wages and giveth him not his hire; that saith, I will build me a wide house and spacious chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and is ceiled with cedar,

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1. Smith, Old Testament History, p. 290.

2. II Kings, 24:1.

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and painted with vermillion. Shalt thou reign because thou striveth to excel in cedar?...But thine eyes and thy heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah: they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah! Lord! or Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,<sup>1</sup> drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

This prophecy was not fulfilled in the account if II Kings, 24:6 is correct but it does give us an insight into the attitude which Jeremiah had toward the King of Judah. It also raises the problem, how much did Jeremiah's personal attitude influence certain parts of his message?

Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, came to the throne in time to reap the punishment which the Babylonians had planned. During this period, Jeremiah continued to work and urged the people of Judah to repent. He showed the people a sample of the loyalty of the Rechabites to the command of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, and rebuked the people of Judah for their failure to remain loyal to

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1. Jeremiah, 22:13-19.

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the law of Yahweh. " The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine are performed; and unto this day they drink none, for they obey their father's commandment. But I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; and ye have not harkened unto me.<sup>1</sup> Judah refused to listen to the words of the prophet and were content to follow the wicked policies of their immediate leaders.

It required but a short time until the reign of King Jehoiachin was brought to a close by Nebuchadrezzar, who decided to take a direct hand in the affairs of the Judean nation. He captured the city of Jerusalem and took the leading citizens into captivity. " And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's mother, and the King's wives, and his officers, and the chief men of the land, carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to

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1. Jeremiah, 35:14.

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Babylon. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, all of them strong and apt for war, even them the King<sup>1</sup> of Babylon brought captive to Babylon." This report is no doubt exaggerated, but Nebuchadrezzar did carry a large group of the best citizens of Judah in captivity.

Nebuchadrezzar then placed Zedekiah upon the throne of Judah and after making a treaty with him, withdrew his forces. Judah was once more left alone to carry out her own program. She had considerable freedom, she could operate her own government, she had her own king, a descendant of David, and many of her corrupt leaders had been taken away. What more could a nation ask? Jeremiah might have felt pleased with the trend of events. Judah had been punished but not destroyed, perhaps the remaining people would listen to the words of Yahweh. But Jeremiah was to be disappointed for the people were too stubborn. They drew their own conclusions about the situation and they turned a deaf ear to the prophet. Once more Jeremiah was driven into isolation, but it brought him closer to God.

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1. II Kings, 24:14-16.

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From the First to the Second Captivity, 586 B.C.-

The people remaining in the land of Judah felt that they had been protected by Yahweh and that they were a select group. The upper class had been taken captive and they were forced to leave their homes and their positions to be filled by the lower strata of society. And one can well imagine the joy that entered the hearts of the poorer people as they assumed control of Judah. Jeremiah was helpless, he tried to change the moral and ethical practices but he had failed. His meditation upon the problem was brought to an end with his vision of the two baskets of figs.

"Jehovah showed me, and behold, two baskets of figs set before the Temple of Jehovah, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad... And the word of Jehovah came unto me saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so

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"Jehonah showed me, and beholds, two baskets of figs set before the Temple of Jehonah, also that Nabuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoniah, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and has brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other baskets had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad... and the word of Jehonah came unto me saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so



will I regard the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart. And as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad, surely thus saith Jehovah, So will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt, I will even give them up to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil; to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.<sup>1</sup> Such a clear statement to a proud and haughty group of people had no meaning whatsoever. They were filled with confidence, they had risen in the

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1. Jeremiah, 24:1ff.

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social realm and no mere prophet was capable of giving them advice. *all what you can perform by good and*

*toward* Jeremiah realized the hopelessness of his task of converting the inhabitants of Judah and decided to use his energy in trying to rebuild the spirit of Yahweh worship in the hearts of the exiles. For this purpose he wrote them an encouraging letter, " Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon: build ye houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters: and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners deceive you; neither harken ye to your dreams which ye caused to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name: I have not sent them saith

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Jehovah. After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. And ye shall call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will harken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.<sup>1</sup>"

Jeremiah's conception of the length of the captivity brought a response from the false prophets. Hananiah<sup>2</sup> predicted the fall of Babylon within two full years. Jeremiah insisted that the Babylonian yoke would remain much longer. An argument resulted, Hananiah took a wooden yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and broke it, declaring

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1. Jeremiah, 29:4-14.
  2. Jeremiah, 28:3ff.

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that Yahweh would break the Babylonian yoke in the same manner. Jeremiah went away, the people and Hananiah were victorious - Jeremiah soon returned wearing an iron yoke and bringing a command from Yahweh that Hananiah would meet his death some time during that same year. The prophecy<sup>1</sup> proved true if we agree with the record of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's constant opposition to the anti-Babylonian party did not aid his popularity. The people refused to thank Babylon for removing the leaders of Judean society and giving them a chance, instead they wished to show their skill in government by violating the Babylonian treaty and resuming their negotiations with Egypt. Jeremiah and others objected, but their voices were not heard and plans were carried on with Egypt until war with Babylon was inevitable.

It was a dark hour in the life of Jeremiah as he saw the clouds of doom slowly gather over the city he loved. He had tried to heal their wounds, he had warned them of their mistakes, but they had given him no attention. Jeremiah was well aware of the power of God, he had felt his touch at the time of his call, and his knowledge of

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1. Jeremiah, 28:17.

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history had convinced him that God loved Israel and was willing to do all that He could to help them, but Israel refused His assistance.

But Jeremiah could not cease his labors, he had to work even though all was hopeless, and he toiled. Skillful thought, careful observation, sympathetic understanding, and sincere prayer regarding human and divine nature resulted in Jeremiah's greatest gift to religion, The New Covenant.

" Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband to them, saith Jehovah. But this is a covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

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But Jeremiah could not cease his labors, he had to work even though all was hopeless, and he failed. He failed, thought, careful observation, sympathetic understanding, and sincere prayer regarding human and divine nature resulted in Jeremiah's greatest gift to religion, The New Covenant. "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them of the hand of Egypt; for they were not of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, saith Jehovah. But this is a covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."



This passage ( Jeremiah, 31:31-34.) is the culmination of Jeremiah's religion.

Jeremiah saw that popular religion did not coincide with true religion. He saw that in the end religion was a personal matter which rested within the heart of each individual and that a social reform which neglected the individual member of society would never succeed. Jeremiah had been commanded to tear down and to destroy and he had tried his best to blot out the national and personal sins of Judah. He opposed idol worship but did not meet with success. He led the attack upon the entire sacrificial system of the Hebrews, " Now the noteworthy thing in this attitude is its uncompromising character. Thus the prophet repudiated the sacrificial system of his nation in principle. He did not accuse the people and the priesthood of having laid undue emphasis on the cult in comparison with the weightier matters of the law, or of having, in exaggerated devotion to ritual, neglected justice and the love of God. He denied the existence in Judah of any ceremonial laws which had the right to lay claim to the authority of Moses. We cannot complicate the question by asking whether the prophet was correct in this representation

This passage (Jeremiah, 31:31-34) is the culmination of Jeremiah's religion.

Jeremiah was a prophet religion and not a religion with a religion. He saw that in the end religion was a personal matter which rested within the heart of each individual and that a social reform which neglected the individual member of society would never succeed. Jeremiah had been commanded to stand up and to testify and he testified his best to blot out the national and personal sins of Israel. He opposed their worship and did not stand with success. He led his attack upon the entire sacrificial system of the Hebrews. "How the noteworthy thing in this sacrifice is the unchanging character. Then the prophet represented the sacrificial system of his nation as primitive. He did not accuse the people and the priesthood of having said words emphasis on the cult in comparison with the religious matters of the law, or of having, in exaggerated devotion to ritual, neglected justice and the love of God. He pointed the existence in Israel of any ceremonial law which had the right to lay claim to the authority of Moses. He cannot complicate the question of ritual whether the prophet was correct in this representation



of the original character of the Mosaic revelation. Obviously, of course, he contradicted the fundamental position of the Jewish law on sacrifice, since all the leading codes in the Old Testament claimed to have been delivered by Yahweh to Moses and therefore to have divine authority.<sup>1</sup> But Jeremiah had also been commanded to build and to plant and his new covenant emphasized three elements which were to be used in rebuilding the nation. First, universal knowledge; second, individualism; and third, forgiveness. The 'Rebel' prophet had found these elements in his own personal religious experience and he gladly presented them to Judah as a foundation upon which she would be able to stand, but Judah again rejected his offer.

The people refused to listen to reason and continued to make treaties with nations in opposition to Babylon. The advice of Jeremiah was brushed aside and he could do nothing but prophesy doom. Babylon was a tool in the hands of Yahweh and He was going to use a foreign King to punish the inhabitants of the promised land. But Zedekiah and

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1. Welch, Jeremiah, p. 143f.

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1. Welch, *Jeremiah*, p. 143f.



the people only laughed. They had broken the moral and ethical codes of both God and man and had prospered by doing so, why should they change?

Zedekiah's program attracted the attention of the Babylonians and they marched toward Jerusalem to start their siege. The Judeans were hopeful, they had faith in the inviolability proclamation which had been issued by Isaiah and expected Yahweh to drive the Babylonian army back from the walls of Jerusalem. Month after month passed, the food supply became short, still God did not come. Jeremiah gave a message of surrender to the Babylonians but it met with bitter opposition. The Prophet suffered many abuses. He was placed in a pit and left to die, but a Eunuch<sup>1</sup> rescued him. While in the pit, Jeremiah gained courage through communion with his God. He was called before King Zedekiah in secret and asked to give God's message. Jeremiah was aware of his situation and though he had no fear of death, asked the king whether the truth would endanger his life, " If I declare unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I

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1. Jeremiah, 38:7f.

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give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken to me. So Zedekiah the king swore secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As Jehovah liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. Then said Jeremiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live and thy house. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.<sup>1</sup>

The interview between Zedekiah and Jeremiah came to an end, the siege continued. The stubborn Judeans refused to surrender. Finally some of the forces saw the hopelessness of their task and tried to escape, but the Chaldean forces were masters of the situation and they overtook the fleeing Zedekiah and destroyed his house.<sup>2</sup>

The Babylonian army left nothing but smoldering ruins

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1. Jeremiah, 38:14-18.

2. Jeremiah, 39:4f.

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as they returned to their native soil. The palaces of the Jews were wrecked and burned, the wall was torn down, the sacred Temple, built by Solomon, was destroyed, and the people were taken into captivity. It was a sad plight for the proud inhabitants of Jerusalem for they had not become fully acquainted with the privileges which they had received immediately after the first captivity.

Jeremiah's prediction had come to pass, Jerusalem no longer stood as a contradiction to the prophetic truth. The prophet had played his part, he had worked in the face of failure, and though he did not see success, the seeds which he had planted began to sprout and they were strong enough to prevent the Hebrew religion from perishing with the national government. Doctor A. B. Davidson says, in regard to the work of Jeremiah during this period, " This period is signalised by the career of Jeremiah, who enabled the people to pass through the shock of the destruction of their nationality and the privations of the Exile, partly by teaching them to look to the future, and to hope for that New Covenant which Jehovah's unchanging love to them could not yet bring in, but mainly by bringing home to the people's heart the truth that religion was not a

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thing of nationality, but had its seat in the individual soul; that the dissolution of the nation was not the destruction of religion, and that whether they were in Babylon or in Judah, Jehovah was present, and could be served and loved. This truth had of course, been taught at all times, but never before with such earnestness and power. It was the truth above all needful for that age. The prominence given to it by Jeremiah not only saved the people of God from despair at the time, but formed the greatest stride, which the religion of Israel had made for centuries towards becoming a universal religion.<sup>1</sup>"

Jeremiah had tried hard to save his country from destruction, he had followed the voice of Yahweh, he had remained true to his vocational consciousness, and had not wavered in the face of bitter persecution. Now Jerusalem was in ruins, the Temple was destroyed and the people were lined up for deportation. Even Jeremiah was chained to the masses of people and with them he started the journey across the desert to Babylon. He had left Anathoth of his own free will, but now he was being forced out of his own country, the land for which he had labored in vain.

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1. Davidson, Old Testament Prophecy, p. 29.

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From 586 B. C. On- We cannot help but wonder how Jeremiah felt starting his journey to Babylon as a captive. He had given his best to Judah, but he had suffered defeat. Early in his ministry he would have complained, but not now. He refused to cry out, " I told you so." and he refused to seek methods of escape from the band of captives. Silently the prophet started his journey, but at Ramah, one of the old prophetic centers, the officials of the Babylonian army received orders to locate Jeremiah and to treat him as a man of honor. " And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, Jehovah thy God pronounced this evil upon this place; and Jehovah hath brought it, and done according as he spake: because ye have sinned against Jehovah, and have not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. And, now, Behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thy hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me to Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee; whither it seemeth good and right unto thee to go thither go."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jeremiah, 40:2-4.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DO hereby certify that  
[Name] is a citizen of the United States  
and is entitled to the rights and  
privileges of citizenship.  
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL  
this [Date] day of [Month], 19[Year].  
[Signature]  
[Title]

RECEIVED



The choice stood before Jeremiah. After ten days of thought the prophet did not meditate long for he knew the conditions of his native land, he knew the class of people that remained, he knew the enmity which existed between the captives and himself, and above all he knew God's desires and would follow them as long as possible. Jeremiah did not have to think the proposition over before he could decide, he knew the answer as soon as the Babylonian guard gave him his choice - and he remained to help Gedaliah rebuild the kingdom of Judah.

Gedaliah, perhaps a member of the Babylonian party in Jerusalem, was placed in charge of the fragment which Babylon regarded as worthless. He could not set up his government in Jerusalem for it was totally destroyed as far as buildings were concerned, but he did organize his forces in Mizpah.<sup>1</sup> However, the restoration was soon brought to a close with the murder of Gedaliah by a band of jealous Jews under the influence of the King of Ammon.<sup>2</sup> The terror stricken inhabitants asked Jeremiah for advice but this time Jeremiah was caught off guard and he had to wait

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1. Jeremiah, 40:7ff.  
 2. Jeremiah, 40:13ff.

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before he could present an answer. After ten days of thought and meditation, the prophet gave the answer<sup>1</sup> which he had received from Yahweh. But the people refused to remain in Judah. They had recently witnessed the strength and the cruelty of a Babylonian siege, and now they had no city to flee to for protection. Their reasoning was fanatic for they did not have the poise and stability of Jeremiah, who had learned to find rest in God. They felt that Nebuchadnezzar would soon arrive to gain revenge and acted accordingly. They gathered up what few possessions they had and fled into Egypt,<sup>2</sup> the land from which their fathers had been led by Yahweh. Years before they had left the land of Egypt to find freedom, but now they returned to their masters for the same purpose. Jeremiah would have remained alone, but the frightened people had learned that Yahweh spoke to the prophet and they took him to Egypt.

Jeremiah's last picture of his land was that of ruins, how hard he had tried to save it, no one knows, how much he had suffered to help others, no one knows,

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1. Jeremiah, 42:7ff.

2. Jeremiah, 43:5ff.

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but we do know that few, if any, have worked harder to bolster up a falling nation and to save its ideals from ruin. Jeremiah did not see the fruit of his work but writers praise him for his labors.

" Yet the effects of Jeremiah's vehement protest seem at the first sight hard to discover. The last scene in which he appears might rather be symbolic. Before the curtain drops, the stage reveals the prophet a defeated man among the group of fugitives who took refuge in Egypt. The people he had tried to serve were there against his advice and were refusing to listen to him, now that they had forced him into exile. They told him with stubborn defiance that it was better with them when they served the queen of heaven as well as Yahweh. And he told them in reply that life on these principles meant that within a generation there would not be a Jew left in Egypt. The core of their national life was their religion, and their religion meant the acknowledgement of no other god beside Yahweh. Yet, significantly enough, the men refused to leave their intransigent mentor behind them in Judah, and did not fail to consult him even in Egypt. That was Israel's inveterate habit. They would neither commit themselves absolutely

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to their prophets, nor would they let them wholly go. So, because he though dead continued to speak, the community in Egypt survived. The Temple at Elephantine with its goddess beside Yahweh passed, and left a handful of papyri. But the Jews of Alexandria built a synagogue for prayer, and translated their Scripture into the Greek which their children could understand. They lived without sacrifice, but they could not live without prayer and the eternal word which prescribed for them their way of Jewish obedience. They became citizens of Egypt who owned an allegiance beyond that claimed by its kings. Because the prophet had his hold upon their life, they bred Philo, Greek and Jew."

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1. Welch, Jeremiah, p. 242f.

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THE SUMMARY.

Jeremiah has been regarded as a person filled with divine gifts, or as a prophet filled with a message of pessimism and doom by many people and to a certain degree they are right. Jeremiah did possess divine gifts, but he earned them all, and Jeremiah did have a message of pessimism, " Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the <sup>1</sup> leopard his spots?", he did have a message of doom which he used in an attempt to change the thought life of Judah, but behind all was a man filled with a human heart and a love for both God and man that caused him to sacrifice his highest personal desires in order to help improve the social and moral conditions of his age. Jeremiah was sensitive to the evil and wickedness about him and his reaction toward it was deeply embedded in the mind of the Jew so that centuries later, when Jesus was the subject of much conversation, the attempt to describe him found meaning in the words, " Some say that thou art Jeremias."<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah lived in an age of political unrest. The

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1. Jeremiah, 13:23.
  2. Matthew, 16:14.

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Jeremiah lived in an age of political unrest. The



great Assyrian Empire which had conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722 B. C. had reached its height during the reign of Ashurbanipal ( 668 - 626 B. C. ) but in less than twenty years after his death it had fallen among the dead nations of history. The Scythians were able to break the mighty shell while the Neo Babylonians and the Egyptians fought over the contents. At Carchemish the Egyptians were defeated and Babylon took control of the Arabian peninsula until the Medes and the Persians wrested it from their hands. Jeremiah understood the historical setting of his day and he acted in accordance with his knowledge, but the people of Judah refused to listen to Jeremiah's unbiased interpretation of history and because of their political blindness, they were swept into captivity.

Jeremiah was the son of a priest and was reared in a religious home. We know very little of his childhood, but with the aid of the rich biographical material which is found within his book we are able to construct an outline of his early life. The knowledge gained through a study of his geographical environment and of his religious teaching coupled with the insight into his life which comes from a study of his illustrations will add to the outline. When

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the picture is completed, we find that Jeremiah possessed all the qualities of a typical lad, chief of which were his inquisitive nature and his desire for knowledge. He was a young idealist, as most boys are, and looked forward to accomplishing great things for his country. When he heard the news of the Scythian invasion, he thought of nothing more than doing his best to serve Judah.

We know more about Jeremiah as a man than we do of him as either a child or a youth and this is largely due to the fact that he left his personal confessions for the benefit of those who were to follow. These passages are scattered through-out the second quarter of his book and have played a large part in the shaping of religious thought. Doctor Skinner says, " It is not too much to say that if these precious fragments had perished, not only would the most vital element in Jeremiah's individuality and influence remained unknown, but the devotion of the Jewish Church would have been immeasurably poorer in that strain of personal piety which saved its religion from degenerating into a soul-less legalism."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 201.

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Through the confessional passages, we can see how Jeremiah hated his enemies and at the same time, deep within his heart there was a never failing source of love for all mankind. Jeremiah feared the greatness of his task, we find examples of fear displayed at the time of his call and throughout his earlier ministry, but we also find examples of a courage similar to a bronze wall. We can see Jeremiah as an individual, working alone, covered with a coat of despair but beneath the covering an eternal spring of optimism and hope is found. He was filled with moods of all sorts. Sometimes he was a cynic, sometimes he wished to flee from all mankind and find refuge in a lone hut among the jungles, and sometimes he even wept because of his earnest sympathy for his people. His friends were few, but they were true and loyal. He was a firm believer in the power of prayer and through it he received the power, the balance, and the courage to face the most bitter persecution. As a worker Jeremiah had one method and that was to destroy the decayed spots within the present society before he attempted to rebuild a new social order. Patch work would never suit a man like Jeremiah. There are times when inquisitive persons become monotonous, but when Jeremiah asked a question

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 persons become monuments, but when Jeremiah sees a question



it was not easily answered but before he finished, his mind was satisfied that he was on the right track toward the solution.

Jeremiah was above the normal person in his love and devotion to God. He had some trouble between the religious and the secular elements within his own soul but he mastered them in time and continued his steady march toward perfection. There were times when Jeremiah was forced to live as a hermit, for he had no wife nor family; that was his lot, but he continued to go on. Some authorities may class him as a sick soul, others may call him a mystic, and to a certain degree both may be right. Jeremiah could easily pass the test which William James uses in order to classify a mystic. Jeremiah possessed each of the four qualities which Doctor James requires, ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, passivity, but he surpassed the mystic in maintaining a rational mind and a practical outlook which made his work of lasting value to humanity. Jeremiah developed the spiritual conception of religion and through it he worked his way out of the narrow priestly guild at Anathoth into a national character and finally he caught the vision that Jehovah could be worshipped outside the boundaries of Judah.

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In common with other great religious leaders, Jeremiah possessed a particular moment through which his entire life's work was changed. Through this experience he felt a nearness of God which was able to carry him through his dark hours of despair and he always remembered the command of God to go on, and he went on in spite of all. In a single section of his confessions, Jeremiah, 20:7-18, the prophet complains of the compulsion to preach the word of Yahweh, and then curses his birth, but in this passage we have, according to Doctor A. S. Peake, "one of the most powerful and impressive passages in the whole realm of prophetic literature, a passage which takes us, as no other, not only to the depths of the prophet's soul, but into the secrets of the prophetic consciousness. For the psychology of prophecy contains nothing which is so instructive, nothing which displays so vividly the contact between the Divine and human element." At first Jeremiah opposed his call, but he lost his battle and completely surrendered to Yahweh and received his commission along with words of encouragement. With his call came two visions and they mapped out his entire ministry.

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1. Peake, Jeremiah, (New Century Bible.) p. 241.

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1. Peake, Jeremiah, (New Century Bible), p. 241.



Immediately following his call, Jeremiah's religious experience began to develop. He saw the struggle between the religion of Yahweh and the religion of Baal and he tried to expel Baalism along with all other forms of idol worship. His first oracles show that he was under the influence of Hosea and that he had learned to know God as a kind heavenly father who was eager to help his children. The Scythian poems were the next to appear, but these prophecies failed to come to pass and the prophet was driven into isolation. Then came the Deuteronomic reform and we are at loss to know the exact part played by Jeremiah. But it is safe to assume that he played an active part in the Reform of Josiah during its earliest stages. The death of King Josiah robbed Jeremiah of his governmental protection, but he had reached the point where earthly power was not sufficient to hinder his progress. He went on with his work. He stood before the crowds at the Temple and begged the people to cast their evil practices aside and worship Yahweh. He was ridiculed and threatened and would have been put to death if a friend had not recalled the similar experience of the prophet Micah.

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The Babylonian victory at Carchemish changed the position of the Judean government from Egyptian to Babylonian and it caused increased hatred toward Jeremiah on the part of King Jehoiakim. The prophet was ordered to remain silent but Jeremiah felt that his message was necessary and he had his friend Baruch write it and read it before the elders and the king. A revolt against Babylonian authority ended in the first captivity and in the placing of Zedekiah upon the throne of Judah.

For a while the affairs of the small nation prospered. The poor assumed the leadership of the country and were overjoyed. Then they began to rationalize, Jehovah had blessed them, they were his favorite people, and in spite of Jeremiah's advice, they acquired the proud and haughty spirit of their immediate ancestry. Jeremiah could do nothing but his attempts to solve the problem ended in a vision of two baskets of figs. Through this vision, Jeremiah discovered that the hope of Israel was to be found among those in exile and he wrote them an encouraging letter, urging them to continue with their work, to pray for Babylon, to remain peaceful, and to seek Yahweh and worship him alone.

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Jeremiah's prediction of the length of the captivity was challenged by the false prophets and a semi-fight occurred between the two groups. Jeremiah suffered in so far as public opinion was concerned and was practically driven into isolation by the society he was trying to aid. Then came his final great gift to humanity, The New Covenant. In this new covenant Jeremiah emphasized the individual's relationship with God, universal knowledge, and the element of forgiveness. This gift alone places Jeremiah among the leading religious teachers of all ages.

Conditions in Judah improved and they reached the point where they were confident of their strength and broke their treaty with Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar was ready for action and after a terrible siege entered the city of Jerusalem and reduced it to ashes. The citizens were placed in chains, Jeremiah among them, and started on the road to Babylon. At Ramah, Jeremiah was given his choice to go on to Babylon and live in peace, or to remain in Judah. He chose the latter and with the new governor Gedaliah, he started to rebuild the nation of Israel.

But Jeremiah's life was to be one of sorrow to the very end. Gedaliah was murdered and the terror stricken

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inhabitants begged the prophet for advice. Jeremiah spent ten days in meditation, but during that time the people recalled the brutality of the Babylonian soldiers. They thought that Nebuchadrezzar would sweep them out of existence and they made up their mind to flee before Jeremiah presented his answer. Jeremiah urged them to remain in the land, but they would not listen. They fled to Egypt and took their prophet along. In Egypt Jeremiah continued his old method of denouncing evil and planting good. Those that heard did not mend their ways, but his words were remembered and the generations to come were blessed by them. The did not bear fruit during the life time of the sower, but he prepared the soil well enough to give the seeds a chance to sprout and he sowed them thick enough to hinder the cruel forces of the world from destroying them all.

Jeremiah was sensitive and he wrote poetry of the highest type, Doctor H. Wheeler Robinson adds, "But it is in the poetry of the book that its chief treasure lies, and that poetry takes the form of the religious lyric which is Israel's greatest aesthetic achievement. And in Jeremiah the stream of Israel's personal religion deepens that it may at last broaden into the piety of the Psalter, to

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1. Robinson, The Cross of Jeremiah, p. 32.



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